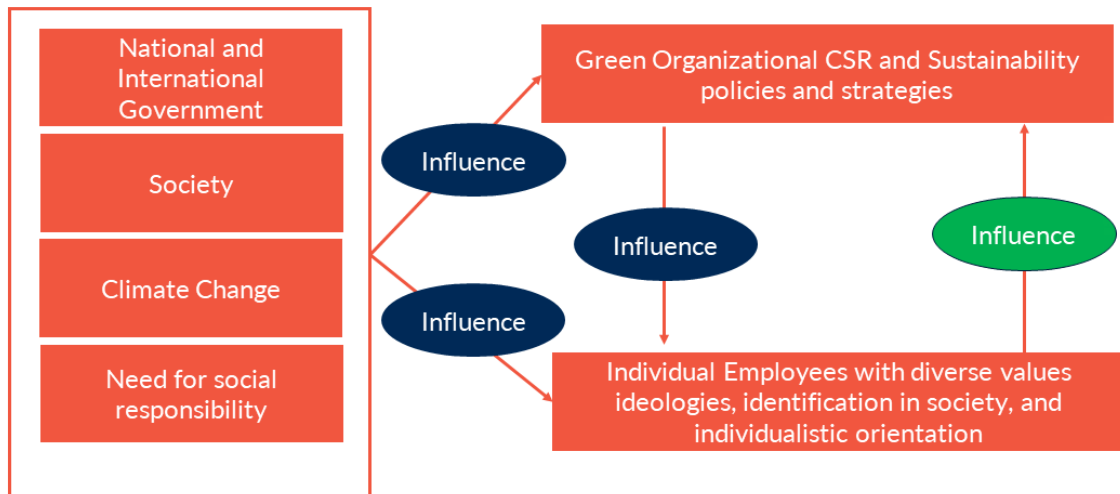


**Bhavesh Sarna**

# Understanding Employee-CSR Relationship by Exploring Microfoundations of Corporate Social Responsibility

---



JYU DISSERTATIONS 745

---

**Bhavesh Sarna**

**Understanding Employee-CSR Relationship  
by Exploring Microfoundations of  
Corporate Social Responsibility**

Esitetään Jyväskylän yliopiston kauppakorkeakoulun suostumuksella  
julkisesti tarkastettavaksi Agoran Lea Pulkkisen salissa  
helmikuun 16. päivänä 2024 kello 12.

Academic dissertation to be publicly discussed, by permission of  
the Jyväskylä University School of Business and Economics,  
in building Agora, Lea Pulkinen room, on February 16, 2024, at 12 o'clock.



JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO  
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

JYVÄSKYLÄ 2024

Editors

Juha-Antti Lamberg

Jyväskylä University School of Business and Economics

Päivi Vuorio

Open Science Centre, University of Jyväskylä

Copyright © 2024, by the author and University of Jyväskylä

ISBN 978-951-39-9910-0 (PDF)

URN:ISBN:978-951-39-9910-0

ISSN 2489-9003

Permanent link to this publication: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-9910-0>

## ABSTRACT

Sarna, Bhavesh

Understanding employee-CSR relationship by exploring microfoundations of corporate social responsibility

Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2024, 84 p. + original articles

(JYU Dissertations

ISSN 2489-9003; 745)

ISBN 978-951-39-9910-0 (PDF)

This doctoral study bridges microfoundations initiatives and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) helps in understanding individual-level differences by assessing the individual attitudes and emotions that influence organizational CSR programs. It shifts the focus from industrial psychology's generic factors (e.g., fatigue and boredom) to a more intricate view of individual employees' microfoundations.

This study employs a comprehensive methodology including a literature review and two empirical case studies. The literature review explores historical employee-CSR interactions, mapping existing perspectives and their limitations. The first case study scrutinizes national CSR regulations in India from a communicative viewpoint, highlighting how macrolevel CSR regulations affect individual attitudes. The second case study delves into the cognitive aspects of individual employees, focusing on emotional reactions in stressful CSR-related scenarios.

In doing so, this study addresses the central research question: How can organizations comprehend and accommodate diversity among employees to effectively implement CSR initiatives? Through a series of subquestions, this study investigates the relationship between employee attitudes and CSR in the existing literature, explores the microlevel perspectives vis-à-vis macrolevel regulations, and evaluates how employees navigate emotionally charged situations stemming from organizational CSR reputation.

This thesis proposes a meta-framework that combines individual and organizational perspectives on CSR, deepening our understanding of micro-CSR initiatives. This implies that managing individual differences can help organizations achieve comprehensive CSR goals.

In summary, this study significantly contributes to both academic discourse and practical applications of CSR. By emphasizing individual differences, it not only enriches the scholarly landscape of micro-CSR but also provides organizations with actionable insights for enhancing CSR practices, thereby facilitating a more socially responsible and sustainable future.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Microfoundations, Micro-CSR, Employees

## TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

Sarna, Bhavesh

Ymmärrystä työntekijöiden ja yritysten yhteiskuntavastuun välisestä suhteesta tutkimalla yritysten vastuullisuuden mikrorakenteita

Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, 2024, 84 s. + alkuperäiset artikkelit

(JYU Dissertations

ISSN 2489-9003; 745)

ISBN 978-951-39-9910-0 (PDF)

Yritysten yhteiskuntavastuun (Corporate Social Responsibility, CSR) käsitteen kehittyessä, tarve ymmärtää sen täytöntöönpanoa ja vaikutuksia tulee yhä tärkeämmäksi. Tämän väitöstutkimuksen tavoitteena on kuroa umpeen makro-CSR-aloitteiden ja mikro-CSR-erojen välistä kuilua tarkastelemalla yksilötason asenteita ja emotionaalisia kokemuksia, jotka tehostavat tai hidastavat vastuullisuustavoitteiden toteuttamista. Tämä pragmaattiseen filosofiaan perustuva tutkimus edistää yritysten yhteiskuntavastuun tutkimusta siirtämällä katseen perinteisestä teollisuuspsykologiasta, joka keskittyy usein yleisiin tekijöihin, kuten väsymykseen ja ikävystymiseen, monimutkaisempaan näkemykseen, joka ottaa huomioon yksittäisten työntekijöiden välisiä mikrotasoisia vaihteluita.

Tutkimuksen metodologia sisältää kirjallisuuskatsauksen ja kaksi empiiristä tapaustutkimusta. Kirjallisuuskatsauksessa tarkastellaan työntekijöiden ja yritysten yhteiskuntavastuun vuorovaikutusta sekä kartoitetaan olemassa olevia näkökulmia ja niiden rajoituksia. Ensimmäinen tapaustutkimus tarkastelee Intian kansallista vastuullisuussääntely viestinnällisestä näkökulmasta ja erityisesti makrotason sääntelyn vaikutusta yksilöllisiin asenteisiin. Toisessa tapaustutkimuksessa tarkastellaan yksittäisten työntekijöiden kognitiivista näkökulmaa ja keskitytään erityisesti emotionaalisiin reaktioihin stressaavissa vastuullisuuskysymyksissä.

Tämä tutkimuksen keskeinen tutkimuskysymys kysyy, miten organisaatiot voivat ymmärtää ja mukauttaa työntekijöiden monimuotoisuutta toteuttaakseen tehokkaasti vastuullisuusaloitteita? Tutkimuksella on useita alakysymyksiä, jotka keskittyvät työntekijöiden asenteiden ja yhteiskuntavastuun väliseen suhteeseen olemassa olevassa kirjallisuudessa, mikrotason näkökulmaan makrotason säännöksiin ja työntekijöiden emotionaalisesti latautuneisiin tilanteisiin, jotka johtuvat organisaation yhteiskuntavastuusta.

Tutkimus tarjoaa teoreettisen metakehyksen, joka yhdistää yksilön ja organisaation näkökulmia yritysten yhteiskuntavastuuseen ja siten rikastuttaa ymmärrystämme mikrotason aloitteista yhteiskuntavastuuseen liittyen. Lisäksi se kertoo siitä, että yksilöllisten erojen tunnistaminen ja tehokas hallitseminen voi toimia tehokkaana työkaluna organisaatioille, jotka pyrkivät saavuttamaan CSR-tavoitteitaan. Yhteenvetona voidaan todeta, että tutkimus kontribuoi sekä akatemiseen keskusteluun että käytännön sovelluksiin yritysten yhteiskuntavastuun alalla. Korostamalla yksilöllisten erojen tärkeyttä se ei ainoastaan rikasta mikrotason ymmärrystä yhteiskuntavastuusta, vaan tarjoaa myös organisaatioille käytännönläheisiä oivalluksia yritysten yhteiskuntavastuun käytäntöjen tehostamiseen, mikä edistää vastuullisempaa ja kestävämpää tulevaisuutta.

Avainsanat: yritysten yhteiskuntavastuu, mikrotason tekijät, mikro-CSR, työntekijät

**Author's address** Bhavesh Sarna  
Mattilanniemi 2  
FI-40100 Jyväskylä  
[bhavesb.b.sarna@jyu.fi](mailto:bhavesb.b.sarna@jyu.fi)  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5550-2564>

**Supervisor** Associate Professor Tiina Onkila  
School of Business and Economics  
University of Jyväskylä  
Jyväskylä, Finland

Professor Hanna-Leena Pesonen  
School of Business and Economics  
University of Jyväskylä  
Jyväskylä, Finland

Senior Lecturer Marileena Mäkelä  
School of Business and Economics  
University of Jyväskylä  
Jyväskylä, Finland

**Reviewers** Professor Avanish Kumar  
School of Public Policy and Governance & Center of  
Excellence  
Management Development Institute  
Gurugram, India

Docent Maria Järnlström  
Department of Management  
University of Vaasa  
Vaasa, Finland

**Opponent** Docent Maria Järnlström  
Department of Management  
University of Vaasa  
Vaasa, Finland

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I approach the end of my PhD journey, I feel a combination of emotions, including happiness, pride, and a touch of humility. There is also a bittersweet sensation, as this important chapter of my life draws to a close. My decision to pursue academia was motivated by my passion and intuition as I wanted to delve into research and teaching. This has been the core of my experience, and I have gained a wealth of connections, diverse interests, and shared experiences that have enriched my journey. I did not anticipate the vast array of skills and knowledge I would acquire, the successes and challenges I would face, or the personal growth that would result from these experiences.

The completion of my doctoral studies has been an academic journey marked by both challenges and support. I am grateful to many individuals who encouraged and supported me throughout this journey. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my mother, the late Veena Sarna, who served as a guiding light for me. During her eight-month battle in the ICU, she displayed an unwavering conviction that I should complete my studies. Her unwavering belief in my potential and her enduring spirit have motivated me to persevere through my darkest moments and will continue to guide me in the future. I also dedicate this work to my late sister Smriti Sarna Mendiratta, who had a significant influence on me during my formative years.

I am deeply grateful to my father for his constant support and encouragement during my journey. He has been more than just a parent to me, serving as a guiding force that reminds me of my commitment to fulfill my mother's vision. During the challenging times of the COVID pandemic, when I was tempted to abandon my doctoral studies, his conviction of my abilities and gentle reassurance helped me overcome my doubts. His strength became my own, enabling me to navigate through the difficulties of this journey. I also want to express my gratitude to my father's close friends, Mr. Gonella Venkata Rao, Mr. Manohar Yelisetti, Mr. Debi Charan Swain, and Mr. Vijai Kumar Gupta, who have always been very kind to me.

I am thankful for the support and guidance provided by my supervisors on the professional front. My journey began with the guidance of Associate Professor Tiina Onkila, who was not only a mentor, but also a constant source of support through tough experiences in life. Her unwavering trust in my abilities and freedom to explore my field has allowed me to flourish and grow. Dean Hanna-Leena Pesonen's advice and encouragement were crucial in navigating the complexities of my research, while Senior Researcher Marileena Mäkelä's insights and guidance helped me complete my thesis with clarity and purpose. Each of these remarkable individuals has made significant contributions to my academic and personal growth, and I am grateful for their support.

I am grateful to everyone who participated in the interviews and surveys for providing valuable time and insights. Without their support, the project would not have been successful.

I am deeply moved and sincerely grateful for the time and effort invested by Docent Maria Järnlström and Professor Avanish Kumar, who graciously served as my pre-examiners, with Maria also assuming the role of my opponent. Their thoughtfulness and depth in reviewing my work left me humbled, especially considering their busy schedule. Their engagement with my work was not merely a professional duty but a generous gift of their expertise and time, a beacon of academic rigor, and a source of support in my journey. I genuinely appreciate their involvement, which is a valuable source of inspiration and encouragement.

I am grateful to Professor Rahul Singh, who I call Dhruva Tara (Pole Star). His guidance has been invaluable for my academic journey. He has been a guiding light, illuminating my path during challenging times in my doctoral studies when doubts and uncertainties clouded my academic sky. I am thankful to Rahul and Claudia Linditsch for their encouragement and support in pursuing the capacity-building project application for ERASMUS+. Their guidance was crucial for securing ERASMUS+ funding for the KODECET project, a significant milestone in my academic career. Their invaluable contribution to my journey will always be remembered as a cherished chapter in my story of growth, resilience, and transformative power of support and belief.

I am thankful to the GRONEN network for giving me the opportunity to connect with other researchers and to gain exposure through their platforms. I extend my special thanks to Tobias Hahn, Valentina De Marchi, Nicole Darnall, Johannes Meuer, and Arno Kourula for their guidance, manuscript review, and support while working as a volunteer with the GRONEN community.

I want to thank the Corporate Environmental Management group members who were part of my doctoral studies: Marjo Siltaoja, Stefan Baumeister, Taneli Vaskelainen, Salvatore Ruggiero, Kristiina Joensuu, Sari Hämäläinen, Irene Kuhmonen, Annukka Näyhä, Esko Salo, Milla Sarja, Sirpa Kortelainen, Maija Lähteenkorva, Bonn Juego, Meri Löyttyniemi, Atalay Yavan, Venla Wallius, Minna Käyrä, Sami El Genedy, and Elena Plotnikova. Working in this group was an excellent learning experience, both as a teacher and coordinator for an international master's program, which helped me connect better with the students while teaching several courses. This group was also a valuable source of support, friendship, and humor, making the challenges in writing this dissertation bearable. I also want to thank my many colleagues at the Jyväskylä University School of Business and Economics, including Suvi Heikkinen, Imran Ilyas, Daria Hakola, Dinesh Poudel, Yusuf Shaymardanov, Otso Tolonen, Hilla Hoskonen, and many more, for their informal discussions and collaborations that brightened my days, as well as their professional insights that contributed to my dissertation work.

I would like to express my gratitude towards my friends Sharmistha Guha, Eftimiya Salo, Alicia Medina Rodriguez, Ville Happonen, Sailee Shroff Reshamwala, Dhanik Reshamwala, Vivek Ambastha, Priyank Gupta, Nishi Gupta, Gulshan Arora, Vinita Arora, Gita Chauhan, Surjit Sisodia, Abhijeet Lele, Madhavi Ghare, and many others. I extend my gratitude to Doris Kiendl, Michael



Meallem, Kailash Chaudhary, Muhammad Umair Shah, Aziz Nanthaamornphong, Chutima Tantkitti, Nityesh Bhatt, Anu Tiilikainen-Tervaniemi, and Anu Penttilä for their collaboration on various projects and inspiring me to remain hopeful and relevant in the academic world.

Jyväskylä, December 2023  
Bhavesh Sarna

## FIGURES

Figure 1	Coleman bathtub model demonstrates social arguments in the context of microfoundations .....	29
Figure 2	Meta-framework for inclusive and collaborative CSR .....	60

## TABLES

Table 1	Author's contribution in each research article.....	21
Table 2	Microfoundational grounding and placement of the research agenda on Coleman's bathtub diagram.....	34
Table 3	Detailing the data generation and analysis methods used.....	40

# CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FIGURES AND TABLES

1	INTRODUCTION .....	13
1.1	Background.....	13
1.2	Rationale for the study.....	15
1.3	Aim and research task of the thesis.....	16
1.4	CSR and sustainability: A shared vocabulary .....	18
1.5	Personal research process.....	19
1.6	Structure of the dissertation.....	20
2	THEORETICAL FOUNDATION.....	22
2.1	Introduction to microfoundations.....	22
2.2	Understanding microfoundations.....	24
2.2.1	Analysis of microfoundational studies.....	25
2.2.2	Perspectives of microfoundations .....	25
2.2.3	Interpretations of microfoundations .....	27
2.3	Bathtub model for microfoundational studies .....	28
2.4	Microfoundations in CSR .....	30
2.5	Positioning of the studies .....	31
3	METHODOLOGY .....	35
3.1	Pragmatism research philosophy .....	35
3.2	Methodological choices.....	37
3.3	Research material and analysis.....	39
3.3.1	Article I: A systematic literature review on employee relations with CSR: State of art and future research agenda ..	41
3.3.2	Study II: From compliance to potential for dynamic institutional transformation: Employee perspectives on corporate social responsibility regulation in India .....	41
3.3.3	Article III: Rationality, experiences, or identity work? Sensemaking of emotionally tense experiences of organizational sustainability .....	42
4	REVIEWING THE CONTRIBUTION OF INDIVIDUAL STUDIES .....	44
4.1	Study I: A systematic literature review on employee relations with CSR: State of art and future research agenda.....	44
4.2	Article II: From compliance to potential for dynamic institutional transformation: Employee perspectives on corporate social responsibility regulation in India .....	45

4.3	Article III: Rationality, experiences, or identity work? Sensemaking of emotionally tense experiences of organizational sustainability ....	47
4.4	Synthesis of significant themes in the studies .....	48
4.4.1	Variability in human cognitive processes.....	48
4.4.2	Fundamental role of emotional sensemaking in shaping perceptions .....	49
4.4.3	Navigating tensions and complexities: A bottom-up approach to CSR implementation.....	50
4.4.4	Enhanced CSR outcomes through a multilevel approach in management .....	51
4.4.5	Importance of relevant information through feedback channels .....	52
5	CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS.....	54
5.1	Theoretical contribution.....	54
5.2	Practical contribution .....	58
5.3	Evaluation and validity of the study .....	62
5.4	Limitations and future studies.....	67
5.4.1	Limitations .....	67
5.4.2	Future studies .....	68

## REFERENCES

### ORIGINAL PAPERS

- I Onkila, T., & Sarna, B. (2022). A systematic literature review on employee relations with CSR: State of art and future research agenda. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 29(2), 435–447.
- II Sarna, B., & Onkila, T. (n.d). Micro-level CSR perspectives to macro-level regulations: interplay between uniformity and diversity.
- III Sarna, B., Onkila, T., & Mäkelä, M. (2022). Rationality, experiences or identity work? Sensemaking of emotionally tense experiences of organizational sustainability. *Social Responsibility Journal*, 18(8), 1692–1707.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

In today's global business environment, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has transitioned from being a buzzword to a critical strategic component. This section focuses on the emerging concept of micro-CSR (also known as micro-level of CSR or microfoundations of CSR) and its significance in understanding the individual-level mechanisms driving CSR behavior for the successful implementation of strategic boardroom CSR initiatives into actionable tasks (Gond et al., 2017). This section sets the stage for understanding the role of individual employees in implementing CSR initiatives and shaping organizational CSR efforts.

Exploring the expansion of CSR research, there is a need to focus on micro-CSR, specifically in the employee context (Girschik et al., 2020; Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). Incorporating the essence of CSR into the core of an organizational strategy has become a critical concern for organizations eager to maintain a competitive edge in the international arena (Fryzel & Glavas, 2012; Fryzel & Seppala, 2016). Boardrooms and shareholder meetings are now actively assessing CSR initiatives for their economic, social, and ecological benefits, moving beyond just using them as buzzwords (Matson et al., 2016). Even in the academic realm, such discussions have fostered an interdisciplinary approach to CSR, broadening its scope in management literature. The subjects of discourse range from the financial advantages of implementing CSR practices (Barauskaite & Streimikiene, 2021; Bartolacci et al., 2020) to stakeholder identification and management (Maon et al., 2019) and further seep into the domains of human resource management (HRM) and organizational behavior research (Bouzzine & Lueg, 2022; Lee & Szkudlarek, 2021; Morgeson et al., 2013; Podgorodnichenko et al., 2022). As the concept of CSR has expanded and evolved, new avenues for development have emerged. However, there needs to be more in-depth research on micro-CSR,

which primarily focuses on individual employees, indicating a potential area for further exploration (Gond et al., 2017).

Micro-CSR provides insights into the impact of CSR on employees and highlights the need to explore individual-level contributions to CSR practices (Koch et al., 2019). Micro-CSR research is critical for understanding the individual-level psychological mechanisms driving CSR behavior in organizations (Rupp & Mallory, 2015). However, limited research in this area (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Gond et al., 2017; Girschik et al., 2022; Rupp & Mallory, 2015) highlights the need to investigate further individual contributions to CSR practices and their organizational impact. Jones et al. (2017) call for more research on individual-level factors influencing CSR behavior, while Gond and Moser (2021) suggest exploring how individual-level CSR actions align with broader organizational strategies. To address the gap in micro-CSR literature, researchers must explore the impact of CSR on individual employees and how these individuals shape organizational CSR initiatives (Kaidesoja, 2013; Pache & Santos, 2013). Moreover, researchers know little about how individuals perceive CSR and how their perceptions affect the relationship between CSR and specific outcomes at both individual and organizational levels (Shea & Hawn, 2019).

Furthermore, employee engagement in CSR initiatives is significant, as Rupp et al. (2006) highlighted, because employees directly evaluate their organization's CSR performance. Organizations constantly face choices between various stakeholder demands within the society and the value chain (Aguilera et al., 2007). Employees continuously assess organizational priorities, which determine the implementation of CSR policies (De Roeck & Farooq, 2018; Ruepert et al., 2017). Employees' assessment of CSR initiatives can vary significantly based on their experiences and cognitive capacities.

Various factors influence employees' understanding of CSR, including personal environmental beliefs, values, attitudes, and organizational dynamics (Chou, 2014; Huber & Hirsch, 2017). The organizational behavior literature suggests that individual employees undergo personality changes due to internal organizational pressures and external events (Tasselli et al., 2018). As a result, they develop a unique understanding of CSR shaped by a combination of personal beliefs and organizational factors. Understanding these factors is critical to comprehending employees' engagement with CSR initiatives and overall perceptions of CSR within the organization.

The primary focus of this thesis is on the role of individual employees in implementing CSR initiatives and shaping organizational CSR efforts. Employees are often identified as critical stakeholders in CSR implementation (Carroll, 1999; Henriques & Sadosky, 1999; Preuss et al., 2009). Understanding how they perceive CSR issues individually and how they can personally impact organizational CSR initiatives is crucial because their perceptions, motivations, and actions directly influence the effectiveness and authenticity of a company's CSR strategy (Vlachos et al., 2017).

In conclusion, micro-CSR research is essential for understanding the individual-level psychological mechanisms driving CSR behavior in

organizations and the linkages between the microfoundations of CSR and organizational performance. While previous studies have concentrated on how CSR can satisfy employees' psychological and developmental needs, researchers need to pay more attention to understanding each employee's unique needs. It is necessary to study the differences among employees regarding CSR at the microfoundations of an organization to understand how these differences collectively affect an organization's CSR efforts. Investigating individual-level factors like perception, personality, emotions, training, attitude measurement, employee selection techniques, work design, and job stress in the context of CSR can achieve this (Felin et al., 2015; Gond & Moser, 2021; Gond et al., 2017, 2022; Rupp & Mallory, 2015).

## **1.2 Rationale for the study**

This section explains the driving force behind this doctoral study: understanding the multifaceted nature of implementing CSR initiatives within organizations at the microfoundational level. This section delves into the complex dynamics of employee cognition, emotions, cultural awareness, and the impact of multidisciplinary approaches. These dynamics play crucial roles in organizations' microfoundations and influence the successful implementation of CSR initiatives.

The dynamic and complex nature of the organizational landscape creates significant complexity for organizations seeking to execute CSR initiatives. These complexities become even more pronounced at the microfoundational level, where individual employees' differing perspectives on climate change and the challenging task of reconciling these differences present roadblocks for effective CSR implementation (Glavas, 2016; Greenwood et al., 2011; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; Rupp & Mallory, 2015). Successful implementation of CSR at the microfoundational level requires a deep understanding of the diverse cognitive abilities, emotional responses, personal identities, and cultural knowledge of individual employees (Gond et al., 2017). For example, a complex issue, climate change impacts individuals differently, making crafting an all-encompassing strategy challenging (Pache & Santos, 2013). Furthermore, the multidisciplinary nature of CSR issues introduces various solutions for managing CSR within organizations, often leading to decision-making complexities (Secchi, 2009).

Given the multidisciplinary approach to CSR, employee responses at the microfoundational level can be diverse (Nejati & Shafaei, 2023). These differences stem from variations in individuals' assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules that guide their interpretations and actions during the implementation of CSR strategies (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). Therefore, it is essential to consider employees' perspectives when implementing CSR strategies. By doing so, organizations can ensure that their CSR initiatives are successful and that employees are fully engaged.

At the micro-level, individual cognition and responses significantly impact CSR strategy implementation (Story & Neves, 2014). Understanding how employees comprehend the role of CSR initiatives within their organizational context is crucial, as is understanding their perceptions of the roles of other stakeholders in implementing such initiatives (Story & Neves, 2014; Vlachos et al., 2017). Multiple factors, including familiarity with the subject, perceived contradictions among colleagues, and personal identities, can significantly influence the success of CSR strategies within an organization (Hazan & Ziber, 2019; Onkila, 2017). Furthermore, employee emotions play a vital role in implementing CSR initiatives in organizations' microfoundations (Vuong & Bui, 2023). Logical contradictions in CSR can elicit strong emotional reactions, and understanding these emotions is paramount for managing employees' responses (Creed et al., 2010). By studying the role of emotions at the microfoundational level, this thesis provides insights into the cognitive and emotional processes leading to effective CSR implementation and how they influence employees' attitudes and behaviors toward organizational CSR policies.

In conclusion, CSR implementation challenges are multifaceted, stemming from a dynamic organizational landscape, varying perspectives on climate change, and the cognitive, emotional, and cultural aspects of employees at the micro-level of an organization. A comprehensive understanding of these dynamics is paramount for effective decision-making and developing robust CSR strategies considering the diversity of responses within an organization. A deeper exploration of these factors at the micro-foundational level will enhance our understanding of the cognitive and emotional processes underlying effective CSR implementation. In turn, this understanding contributes significantly to improving organizational CSR performance.

### **1.3 Aim and research task of the thesis**

This section outlines the study's objectives, research questions, and methodology. The study actively employs a pragmatic approach to enhance CSR, examining individual differences in CSR. It aims to contribute theoretically by linking macro-CSR initiatives with micro-CSR differences. It focuses on understanding how individual-level differences can affect organizational CSR implementation and how to bridge these gaps.

This doctoral study, grounded in a pragmatist philosophy, addresses a significant gap in the CSR domain. The primary objective was to uncover the differences in individual employees' attitudes toward CSR and develop a more comprehensive approach to CSR on a broader scale. In contrast to traditional industrial psychology, this investigation goes beyond individual factors, such as fatigue and boredom, to explore how microfoundational variations can impact CSR initiatives at the organizational and institutional levels.

This study examines individual attitudes toward CSR using a diverse approach. This study included a literature review and two empirical case studies.



The literature review sheds light on past employee–CSR interactions. Case studies provide a view of CSR in organizations. The first case study examines national CSR regulations from a communicative perspective in the microfoundations literature, and the second examines emotional reactions to stressful situations regarding CSR reputation from a cognitive perspective in the microfoundations literature.

This study poses several pertinent questions in pursuit of a nuanced understanding of CSR at the individual level. The central research question of this study is as follows: How can organizations comprehend and accommodate employee diversity for effective implementation of CSR initiatives? The study proposed investigating the following three questions to answer this broader question.

- RQ1: How does the literature represent the employee–CSR relationship, and what patterns emerge?
- RQ2: What are the micro-level perspectives on CSR relative to the macro-level CSR regulations?
- RQ3: How do employees aim to resolve emotionally tense situations caused by societal stigma regarding organizational image?

Each research component contributes to a broader understanding of individual differences in CSR. Article I, a literature review, tackles the first question by exploring employee–CSR relationships within the existing literature. Article II focuses on the second question and investigates employees’ diverse experiences with mandatory CSR regulations in India. Finally, Article III examined how employees make sense of emotionally tense situations related to an organization’s CSR reputation.

Despite its broad implications, this research focuses on the microfoundational level. This study highlights the importance of focusing on individual employees in understanding CSR implementation rather than treating them as collective organizational units. This study contributes to developing a theoretical meta-framework that can bridge individual and organizational perspectives on CSR, enhancing our understanding of micro-CSR initiatives. This framework has potential applications beyond employee differences and extends to other stakeholders with varied values, perspectives, and interests.

This study emphasizes the understanding and management of diversity. The research constraints highlight the necessity of delving into the intricate world of individual differences and their influence on CSR initiatives rather than the broader factors influencing these initiatives. The benefits of this focused research approach lie in its ability to underline the need to understand and manage diversity to cultivate effective organizational CSR initiatives. By recognizing individual differences as a resource, organizations can tailor their CSR initiatives more effectively, comprehensively fulfilling their CSR objectives. By setting these boundaries, this study ensures a focused exploration of the selected topic,

yielding valuable insights into the microfoundational literature in the CSR context.

In summary, this study has implications for organizations and CSR literature. It helps organizations refine their CSR decision-making processes by providing a deeper understanding of the significance of diversity and its effective management. Thus, it aims to contribute substantially to the body of knowledge on micro-CSR by providing meaningful insights to stakeholders while facilitating organizations in fostering positive societal changes through their CSR initiatives.

#### **1.4 CSR and sustainability: A shared vocabulary**

This section provides an in-depth explanation of the terminological choices made regarding CSR and sustainability. It addresses the complex nature and varied interpretations of these terms in the existing literature and details the rationale behind their specific use in this study. This section aims to align this thesis with broader academic and practical discourse to enhance its relevance and applicability.

The inception and interpretation of CSR have been dynamic and subject to various perspectives. Since its origin in the early 1950s, the notion of CSR has been largely open to interpretation, with no consensus on a single definition (Dahlsrud, 2008; McWilliams & Siegel, 2001). This thesis reflects this complexity in its approach, predominantly employing the term “CSR,” a choice inspired by Aguinis (2011). He defined CSR as “context-specific organizational actions and policies that consider stakeholders’ expectations and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance” (p. 855). This definition harmonizes with the three sustainability perspectives outlined by Brown et al. (1987): social, economic, and environmental, and Elkington’s (1998) triple-bottom-line concept.

An overarching theme in the literature is that CSR is a function of social and environmental sustainability and contributes to sustainable development and socioeconomic growth. The study focuses on selecting specific vocabulary for broader discourse on CSR and sustainability, aiming to clarify the underlying rationale. It employs these terms interchangeably to accommodate multiple interpretations and definitions across various disciplines and contexts. CSR research has traditionally focused on larger-scale analyses, primarily on organizational policies and strategies employed by top-level managers (Frederick, 2016). The study of sustainable development, a concept encompassing macro- and meso-level phenomena, involves examining organizations, governments, and society (Guzzo et al., 2019). However, there is a deviation from this general trend in Article III of this thesis, in which the term “sustainability” is employed, mirroring the language chosen by the employees interviewed within the study’s organizational context.

Although this thesis primarily focuses on CSR, it uses CSR and sustainability interchangeably. This interchangeability acknowledges these

constructs' nuanced and multifaceted nature to resonate with diverse interpretations by academia, research communities, and practitioners. By aligning with this varied discourse, the intention is to enhance the relevance and applicability of this thesis within the broader academic and practical landscape.

## **1.5 Personal research process**

My interest in CSR began during my master's studies, setting the course for my doctoral journey, which began in October 2016. However, the roots of this academic pursuit can be traced back to 2014, during my master's studies. Throughout this period, my interest in various courses in corporate environmental management began to develop and later evolved into the central theme of my doctoral research. During my master's studies, my academic transition from India to Finland provided a unique background and context for my research. This change, coupled with the varied CSR attitudes I observed among my Finnish peers, has guided me to zero on the role of employee diversity in CSR as the crux of my doctoral exploration.

At the beginning of the research, a keenness to understand how diverse employee perspectives influence CSR strategies drove the study, setting clear objectives to guide the investigation toward this path. Establishing clear objectives was crucial at the beginning of this study. I aim to comprehend the impact of diverse employee viewpoints on CSR initiatives and ascertain how these varied perspectives can mold an organization's CSR strategy. I employed a microfoundational approach to achieve these objectives, focusing mainly on the individual factors that influence organizational behavior.

On board my research journey, the foundation became Article I. This comprehensive literature review set the scene for further exploration of the transformative relationship between employees and CSR through a microfoundational lens. This review helped map the existing relationship between employees and CSR and highlighted areas that are strong for further inquiry. This foundation paved the way for deeper dives, as in Articles II and III. Interacting with academic circles such as the GRONEN network was a turning point. These engagements and collaborations with my fellow researchers provided me with a multifaceted learning experience. The richness of the insights and feedback from these collaborations and interactions greatly influenced my work, especially in understanding a phenomenon in an academic context and making it relevant to a more extensive set of audiences, such as students and consultants.

Starting my journey as a doctoral researcher induced a paradigm shift as it unraveled the depth of its complexities, underscored by a symbiosis of individual perspectives, emotions, and interpersonal dynamics. Collaboration with my co-authors is invaluable. These joint efforts expanded my perspective and refined my approach to data analysis and synthesis. Amid many complex insights, I discovered the power of simplicity and the need to distill intricate data for

broader comprehension. In this way, I successfully bridged theoretical and actionable approaches. Table 1 offers a detailed view of the collaborative efforts underpinning the research articles.

Obtaining a doctorate has led to significant personal and academic growth. It has deepened my understanding of CSR and helped me balance the complexities and simplicities inherent in the field. My research can contribute to the success and sustainability of CSR practices in organizations.

## **1.6 Structure of the dissertation**

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: The second chapter examines the core topics of this dissertation's foundation. The concept of micro-levels in sustainability is presented after describing the fundamental tenets of an organization's microfoundations. Through this examination, the reader is equipped with the necessary knowledge to understand how microfoundations are applied in management-related studies. Hence, this dissertation explores different perspectives, interpretations, and scopes of the analysis of microfoundations. Furthermore, this analysis delves into the theoretical and exploratory aspects of microfoundations in the micro-CSR space, providing readers with a comprehensive overview of the field. In addition, it outlines the position of each study within the microfoundational analysis, allowing the reader to gain insight into the scope of each research topic in the micro-CSR context.

The third chapter explains the dissertation's philosophical bases and methodological choices within a qualitative research design. This chapter provides a foundation for data collection and analysis in Articles I-III. This chapter is essential for building a strong foundation for the results of the three studies. This description helps to ensure that the research results were grounded in a well-reasoned approach.

The fourth chapter summarizes Articles I-III. It clearly and concisely synthesizes all articles to validate the research results. Additionally, their overarching themes are combined to demonstrate how the studies contribute to answering each dissertation's research question and how understanding micro-CSR helps manage macro-CSR initiatives through the meta-framework. This chapter explores informed conclusions developed from the synthesis of these papers.

The fifth chapter thoroughly examines the dissertation's arguments concerning the research issue and their contributions to theory and practice. The dissertation's evaluation, adhering to pragmatic standards and reliability, proved this study's validity. This chapter assesses the value of this dissertation's arguments by focusing on their potential to contribute to theory and practice. It also focused on the accuracy and reliability of the research. Finally, it investigates the implications of these arguments and their potential for future research.

Table 1 Author's contribution in each research article

Article number	Title	Research Question	Context and Method	Authors Contribution
I	Onkila, T., & Sarna, B. (2022). A systematic literature review on employee relations with CSR: State of art and future research agenda. <i>Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management</i> , 29(2), 435-447.	How has the literature on employee-CSR relationships grown? What are the observable patterns?	A literature review on employee relationships with CSR, based on 331 journal articles.	I actively contributed to every stage of the study, from its design and methodology to data collection and manuscript development. My co-author and I worked collaboratively, ensuring that each other's work was accurate and robust, particularly during thematic coding of the 331 articles. Although the efforts were mutual, my involvement played a significant role in driving the study to its conclusion.
II	Sarna, B., & Onkila, T. (n.d). Microlevel CSR perspectives to macro-level regulations: Interplay between uniformity and diversity.	What are microlevel CSR perspectives on macrolevel CSR regulations?	A qualitative study to understand individual employees' diverse implementation of Section 135 of the Companies Act by the Indian government, which makes CSR spending mandatory.	As the lead author, I designed the study, collected and analyzed the data, built the theoretical framework, and penned the paper. I have also managed the suggestions for revision. My co-author wrote the theory section and provided valuable input at various stages. This study is currently under review with a journal.
III	Sarna, B., Onkila, T., & Mäkelä, M. (2022). Rationality, experiences, or identity work? Sensemaking of emotionally tense experiences of organizational sustainability. <i>Social Responsibility Journal</i> , 18(8), 1692-1707.	How do employees aim to resolve emotionally tense situations that are consequences of their engagement in sustainability action?	A qualitative study that identifies employees' emotional tensions related to organizational sustainability caused by discrepancies between external reputation and internal personal experience in a European power generation company.	I took responsibility for the design of this study and its theoretical positioning. I took responsibility for writing the introduction and theoretical sections of the paper. The second co-author conducted the data analysis and wrote the findings section, and the third co-author collected the data and wrote about the context of the study. Discussions and other sections were jointly created by all three authors.

## **2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

This section builds upon the theoretical perspectives of organizational microfoundations and summarizes the recent micro-CSR literature. Based on the work of Felin et al. (2015) and Haack et al. (2019), I present a brief discussion of the theoretical concept of micro-CSR within the organizational and institutional literature. This section offers a brief review of the current micro-CSR literature. It also positions the articles in this thesis within the microfoundational literature, anchored in the established theoretical foundation of both microfoundational and micro-CSR studies.

### **2.1 Introduction to microfoundations**

Microfoundational studies are fundamental in understanding how individual behaviors and attitudes shape organizational outcomes (Barney & Felin, 2013; Collins, 1981). Originating from the perceived gap in analyzing individual actors in traditional research, this critical branch of organizational research has steadily become an essential aspect of exploring organizational dynamics (Felin et al., 2015). The subsequent sections discuss the origins, historical context, and modern relevance of microfoundations in management and CSR studies.

Microfoundational studies have focused on how individual behaviors and attitudes influence organizational outcomes. Originating from the need to incorporate the roles and impacts of individual actors, they address a perceived gap in traditional organizational research (Foss et al., 2010; Volberda et al., 2010). With time, these studies have become a cornerstone for understanding organizational dynamics comprehensively.

Microfoundational studies address the historical oversight in the management literature that often sidelined individual actors in favor of macrofactors (Palmié et al., 2023; Stroker, 2010). The organizational literature has

paid less attention to matters regarding appropriate units of analysis (Freeman, 1975). For instance, Hannan and Freeman (1977) described individuals as mere interchangeable units in organizations, mainly ignoring their distinctive qualities and roles. Such perspectives lead to diminished recognition of organizational diversity and nuanced variations, such as differing employee perspectives on CSR. Consequently, microfoundational studies emphasize the unique roles and influences of individuals within organizational settings (Al-Atwi et al., 2021; Felin et al., 2015; Barney & Felin, 2013).

The evolution of microfoundations also spans from economics to sociology and philosophy, reflecting their broad interdisciplinary influence (Baron & Hannan, 1994; Keizer, 2015). Originating from debates in the 1960s concerning the interplay between micro and macroeconomics (Cohen, 2012; Cohen & Bacdayan, 1994), it resonated with social theorists deliberating over the significance of individuals versus collectives. Scholars in management and CSR research have widely acknowledged the role of individual impacts in determining organizational actions (Felin et al., 2015; Gond et al., 2017, 2022; Haack et al., 2019; Rupp & Mallory, 2015).

The study of microfoundations dissects the collective concepts to probe the intentionality of individual aspirations and their influence across organizational hierarchies (Schillebeeckx et al., 2015; Shinkle, 2012). Gaining recognition in diverse academic disciplines, Felin (2015) highlighted that these studies delve into how individual dynamics culminate in varied outcomes across different organizational layers. Rather than replacing prevailing theories, the microfoundational perspective complements them, grounding the discourse in phenomenological, ontological, and epistemological contexts (Haack et al., 2019; Scott, 2008; Tracy, 2016). With the discipline's evolution, scholarly investigations are broadening to encompass areas like cognition, communication, and behavior (Felin et al., 2015). Thus, microfoundations illuminate the nuanced intricacies of individual roles, reshaping our understanding of organizational structures and processes.

Through the lens of microfoundations, organizations, and institutions are shaped by individual members' daily actions and interpretations. Beliefs and interpretations are fundamental in guiding employees in aligning with and contributing to their organization's overarching goals (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017; Tran, 2017; Van den Steen, 2010). Scholars have examined individual-level determinants, grounding their work in bounded rationality, which draws on experiential and learning facets (Felin et al., 2015; Foss, 2003). This perspective highlights how employees, informed by continuous feedback and personal experiences, foster a nuanced understanding of their work environments (Argote & Greve, 2007).

Individual-level cognitive variation, influenced by bounded rationality and forward-looking abilities, is pivotal in shaping organizational outcomes (Foss, 2003). While bounded rationality offers a framework, it does not solely dictate individual or organizational behavior. People often employ their foresight to anticipate future scenarios, particularly when faced with challenges, leading to

subtle yet impactful differences in their actions (Felin et al., 2009; Gavetti & Levinthal, 2000). Furthermore, dedicated employees tap into their expertise and understanding to achieve organizational objectives (Felin et al., 2012; Mikami et al., 2022). Over time, they cultivate guiding principles influenced by daily interactions and experiences, which help discern various actions and their potential organizational implications (Powell & Rerup, 2017). Such cognitive diversity is central to the objectives of microfoundational research.

Microfoundational studies emphasize the interplay between individual actions and their impact across organizational levels, necessitating a thorough understanding of the broader organizational ecosystem (Paoloni et al., 2022). Within this system, various levels exist: individual, organizational, and overarching macroinstitutions that influence organizations. Determining how individual contexts, interactions, and ties at one level shape the broader organizational landscape is integral to microfoundational research (Haack et al., 2019). Although diverse opinions exist on the subject, the consistent underlying premise is the consideration of an individual as the foundational analytical unit. This perspective stresses the transition in organizational studies from an emphasis on uniformity to a more intricate understanding of variance (Felin et al., 2015). Notwithstanding advancements in the field, unresolved issues and debates persist because of deeper inquiry and discussion.

In conclusion, the study of microfoundations represents a paradigm shift in organizational research by emphasizing individual behaviors and attitudes. Through meticulous scrutiny of individual roles, it addresses the void left by conventional methods that often sidestep the complexities associated with singular roles. Although it is a relatively nascent domain, its influence is evident across various research areas, highlighting the intricacies of organizational behavior. As it matures, it introduces novel viewpoints and approaches, revealing promising avenues for subsequent inquiries. This evolution underscores its transformative impact on organizational research, challenging time-honored beliefs and offering a more nuanced comprehension of organizational dynamics, including the broader ramifications of CSR.

## **2.2 Understanding microfoundations**

This section explores the concept of microfoundations in organizational studies, highlighting their significance and how they can be used to understand complex organizational phenomena better. This section examines microfoundations from cognitive, communicative, and behavioral perspectives. Each perspective highlights its focus and significance in microfoundational research. The cognitive perspective focuses on thought processes and mental frames. The communicative perspective prioritizes interaction and mutual understanding, while the behavioral perspective emphasizes the adaptability and flexibility of individuals in organizations. This section concludes by providing three interpretations of microfoundations in the literature: agencies, levels, and mechanisms. The



discussion of each interpretation demonstrates how it shapes our understanding of microfoundational phenomena and their operation within organizational contexts. This section provides a comprehensive understanding of microfoundations, offering the reader a valuable lens to examine and interpret complex organizational phenomena.

### **2.2.1 Analysis of microfoundational studies**

Microfoundational studies interpret more significant organizational phenomena by examining individual routines and capabilities. These research endeavors span a vast spectrum in terms of scope and ability. Scholars, as represented by Felin et al. (2015), suggest categorizing these investigations into three primary segments: individuals, processes and interactions, and structure. Several strategies and organizational theories (Aime et al., 2010; Felin & Hesterly, 2007; Gavetti, 2005; Nelson & Winter, 1982) emphasize individuals' roles and their interactions when seeking to comprehend variations and results at the organizational level. Laureiro-Martínez et al. (2010) highlighted the role of individual cognition in addition to employee diversity, shaping varied organizational behavioral outcomes.

Routines and capabilities shaped by individual employees' historical and contextual experiences are pivotal in understanding organizational processes and interactions. Winter (2011) emphasized these processes and interactions in organizational studies. In particular, time-dependent processes have emerged as crucial determinants of these routines and capabilities (Pentland et al., 2012). Additionally, formal or informal coordination mechanisms can act as barriers or enablers to individual decisions, further emphasizing the microfoundational perspective (Felin et al., 1994, 2015).

Organizational structures influence individual routines and capabilities. Felin et al. (2015) and Davis et al. (2009) noted that structures can impact routines and capabilities by offering resources and directions. Time-dependent processes shape how individuals interact with their environments and other individuals through coordination mechanisms (Pentland et al., 2012). Thus, structures can either limit or facilitate action. Microfoundational analysis focuses on selected components. For example, this thesis centers on two empirical studies at the individual level. Microfoundational research uses multiple methodologies. Each approach enables the deconstruction of organizational contexts or problems into smaller parts, facilitating a better understanding of complex organizational phenomena. Familiarity with the various perspectives and interpretations of microfoundational studies is beneficial for researchers in the field.

### **2.2.2 Perspectives of microfoundations**

Microfoundational research has adopted multiple analytical perspectives. Despite the lack of consensus on a single preferred perspective in microfoundational studies (Hwang & Colyvas, 2020), three core perspectives are commonly identified: cognitive, communicative, and behavioral (Haack et al.,

2019). These perspectives converge on social actors' shared cognition, expression, and activities (Haack et al., 2019; Suddaby, 2010).

The cognitive perspective emphasizes the role of individual and collective thought processes and mental schemas in guiding appropriate actions and responses. This view, rooted in the influential works of Berger and Luckmann (1967) and Zucker (1977), zeroes in on actors' mental processing capabilities. It seeks to understand how individuals mentally interpret environmental events while performing their roles. Importantly, it considers how variations in these individual interpretations impact organizational outcomes. This approach has both advocates and detractors in the scholarly community. Supporters argue that psychological frameworks constitute organizations' microfoundations (DiMaggio, 1997).

Conversely, critics claim this perspective is excessively atomistic (Cornelissen et al., 2015). They argue that an overemphasis on cognition results in theoretical gaps (Suddaby, 2011) and neglects the social construction aspect of organizations (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Jepperson & Meyer, 2011). However, recent research suggests that the cognitive perspective remains a vital entry point for comprehending the cyclical influences among various actors at different levels within organizations and institutions (Haack et al., 2019). The implication is that the critique, while valid, may still preserve the value of cognition in shedding light on organizational behavior and outcomes.

Communicative perspectives underline the role of dialogue within organizations. Communication holds a fundamental position in institutional and organizational theories. These theories emphasize the role of communicative perspectives in shaping, developing, and even disrupting institutions. Suddaby (2011) even asserted that "institutional theory is a theory of communication" (p. 188), underscoring the criticality of communication among actors at various echelons. This understanding extends beyond institutions to organizational contexts, emphasizing the indispensable role of multilevel communication. From the communicative perspective, communication is not a solitary act but a relational process. It involves active interactions between actors who exchange views to foster mutual understanding (Cornelissen et al., 2015). Central to this perspective is the belief that communication should occur among actors across various organizational levels rather than being a one-way delivery of messages (Reddy, 1979). The communication perspective posits that communication is far more than mere message transmission. It calls for understanding actors' intentions and cognitive abilities to communicate effectively (Suddaby, 2011). In doing so, it highlights the intertwined nature of communication and cognition at different institutional levels, suggesting that they are inherent, intertwined elements in the institutional landscape (Cornelissen et al., 2015).

Finally, the behavioral perspective considers organizations as fluid entities responsive to individuals' actions. It views organizations as dynamic entities shaped by individuals' flexible actions and responses. According to this perspective, as proposed by Smets et al. (2015), organizations do not exist in a rigid structural form but are continuously shaped by how individuals adapt to

various situations. The primary focus is on individuals' actions and interactions at the microlevel or across various organizational levels. While the importance of individuals in organizations is generally acknowledged (Jepperson & Meyer, 2011), the behavioral perspective emphasizes the interactions between individuals and institutions. It recognizes reciprocal influence—individuals and organizations can interpret, influence, and shape each other. Therefore, the behavioral perspective centers on how individual actors and institutions mutually impact each other's daily practices (Haack et al., 2019).

In conclusion, the cognitive, communicative, and behavioral perspectives offer different vantage points for understanding the complex dynamics within organizations, contributing to the richness of microfoundational research.

### **2.2.3 Interpretations of microfoundations**

Microfoundational studies offer diverse interpretations of organizational phenomena. Despite established perspectives, scholars have interpreted microfoundational phenomena differently. Felin et al. (2015) and Haack et al. (2019) identified three distinct interpretations central to microfoundational studies: agency, levels, and mechanisms. These interpretations serve as the backbone of academic theorizing, providing conceptually distinct frameworks that form the foundation of scholarly discourse. However, they are not mutually exclusive and can overlap within a single study. Thus, in the evolving landscape of microfoundational studies, these three conceptual interpretations emerge as key thematic anchors in exploring microfoundational phenomena.

Viewing microfoundations as agencies places individual actors within organizations at the heart of the investigation. Microfoundational studies, as an agency, represent the dominant understanding of perceptions from a behavioral perspective. Proponents interpret microfoundations as agencies that focus on individual actors within organizations. Their studies examine how factors like culture, policies, and systems either 'constrain' or 'empower' these individuals, as highlighted by Hallett and Hawbaker (2020). This approach sheds light on the dynamic relationship between individual agency and organizational structures. Such interpretations develop an understanding of the tension between agency and organizational structures (Battilana et al., 2009). Subscribers of this understanding see the microfoundations of organizations as closely connected to agency and the potential for the effective action of individuals (Haack et al., 2019).

When considering levels, microfoundations are perceived as the driving force behind higher-level phenomena, impacting those at lower levels. According to "microfoundations as levels," higher-level phenomena exert a causal influence on lower-level phenomena (Coleman, 1990; Felin et al., 2015, p.586). "Microfoundations as levels" argue that to explain the cause of a macro-level phenomenon, the level of inquiry is lower than the phenomenon itself (Felin et al., 2015, p.586). Organizations are nested systems at hierarchical levels, where every level requires further analysis (Holm, 1995) of how each level impacts the other. Thus, the aim is to explain or analyze higher-level phenomena by

analyzing lower-level phenomena or actors as proximate causes. In the larger scheme of institutions and organizations, any actor or entity is "micro" in connection with the larger entity. Therefore, it is crucial to explicitly understand 'micro' and 'macro' interests differently (Harmon et al., 2019).

Examining microfoundations as mechanisms is a multifaceted approach. This interpretation frequently intertwines with level interpretation, providing analytical tools to understand the phenomena under scrutiny comprehensively. This understanding creates more precise and broadly applicable theories (Stinchcombe, 1991). In this context, mechanisms serve as theoretical explanations that unravel why specific phenomena or effects manifest (Davis & Marquis, 2005). The examination of microfoundations as mechanisms can be classified into three categories, as discussed by Hwang and Colyvas (2020), Weber and Glynn (2006), and Haack et al. (2019). The first type, situational mechanism, uses cognition and judgment for in-depth analysis and interpretation of microphenomena. The second type, the action-formation mechanism, explains how individual microlevel actions, driven by cognition and judgment, lead to broader phenomena. Finally, the transformational mechanism delineates how smaller-scale phenomena evolve and amplify to become macrophenomena.

The Coleman ("bathtub") model plays a prominent role in the broader body of literature on microfoundations, particularly in strategy and sociology (Felin et al., 2015; Haack et al., 2019; Hedström & Swed-berg, 1998). This model is a valuable tool for studying microfoundations as mechanisms, emphasizing the bidirectional relationship between individual and collective actors in microfoundational research.

### **2.3 Bathtub model for microfoundational studies**

Coleman's (1990) "bathtub" model is a critical framework for dissecting the complex interactions between micro and macrolevel dynamics in CSR initiatives. This model illuminates the significance of individual activities, perceptions, and relationships within an ever-changing organizational context. The model's key elements, such as situational cognition, action formation, and transformational mechanisms, are examined in detail to understand their roles in micro and macro-dynamics (Felin et al., 2015; Haack et al., 2019). The model also allows a nuanced understanding of how broader societal or organizational changes impact these individual-level processes.

The "bathtub" model serves as an analytical tool for understanding multilevel relationships, particularly emphasizing the role of individual actions within the broader organizational context. Initially applied to organizational capabilities, the model is yet to be exhaustively explored in this domain but remains an influential framework for elucidating these complex interactions (Felin et al., 2015). It highlights the fundamental importance of individual activities, perceptions, and relationships in shaping organizational dynamics.

The model, yet to be comprehensively applied to organizational capabilities, clarifies the reasoning process within a stratified social reality, where individual employees constitute the foundational layer. Figure 1 shows the model's efficacy in articulating these complex social dynamics.

This figure visually encapsulates the Coleman bathtub model's utility in bridging macro-and microlevel analyses within an organization. The diagram illustrates the intersection of organization-level studies with those focused on interlevel interactions, mainly through employees. As a synthesis of insights from Felin et al. (2015) and Haack et al. (2019), the figure serves as a roadmap for understanding the connections among macro-macro analyses within the context of microfoundations.

In the figure, each arrow serves as a symbolic guide to different types of research within organizational analysis, focusing on various cognitive and behavioral mechanisms. Arrow 4 and the other components serve as analytical markers, delineating the focus and level of different types of research within the context of macroeffects and individual cognitive processes. The arrows correspond to distinct mechanisms, such as cognitive perspective, action formation, and transformational processes, as delineated by Haack et al. (2019). Although Figure 1 offers clear demarcations, note that empirical studies in the real world often blend these categorical distinctions. This fluidity in actual research allows for a more nuanced understanding of complex situations, as microfoundational studies frequently incorporate the multiple aspects outlined in the figure.

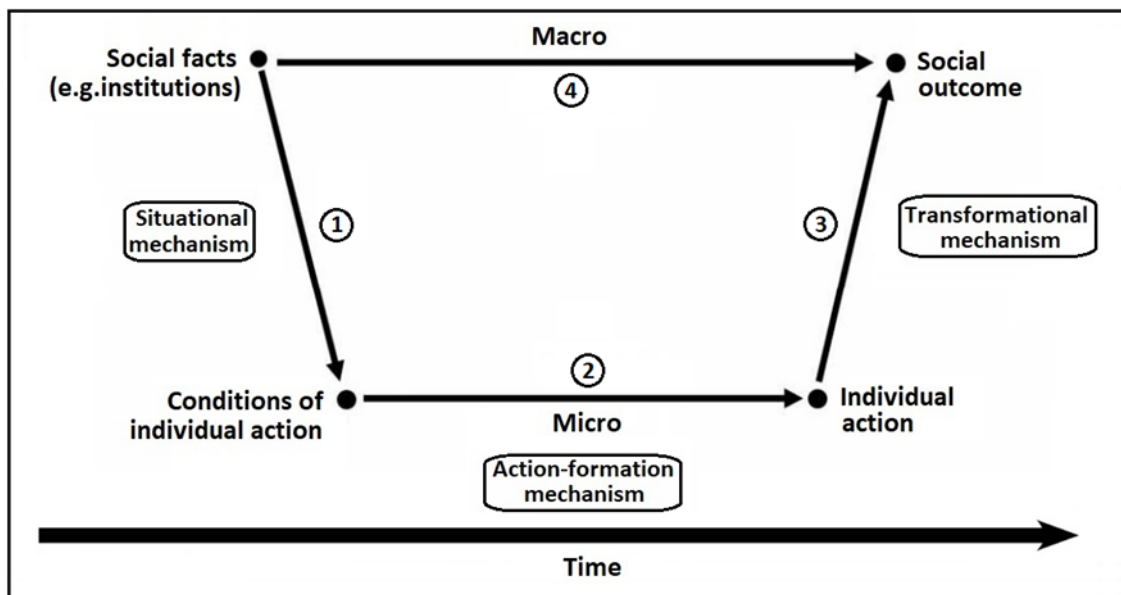


Figure 1 Coleman bathtub model demonstrates social arguments in the context of microfoundations

## 2.4 Microfoundations in CSR

This section introduces the concept of micro-CSR and discusses its growing importance in organizations. Furthermore, this section examines why organizations should increasingly understand micro-CSR perspectives, how individual perspectives on CSR from different stakeholder groups can vary, and why these microlevel insights are crucial for effective and comprehensive CSR strategies.

A complex interplay of internal organizational motivations, external stakeholder demands, and broader societal frameworks influences the adoption of micro-CSR initiatives. On the internal front, factors such as an organization's ethical mission, vision, values, and leadership's commitment to social and environmental responsibility contribute to the uptake of localized responsible business practices (Lee et al., 2013; Parris et al., 2016). Employee engagement and the desire for purposeful work also serve as catalysts (Rupp et al., 2013). Externally, customer awareness of social and environmental impact, investor focus on environmental, social, and governance criteria, and regulatory and industry pressures steer firms toward micro-CSR practices (Persaud & Schillo, 2017). Furthermore, overarching societal frameworks, such as the United Nations' sustainable development goals, offer additional guidance for firms in aligning their micro-CSR initiatives with global challenges (Lee et al., 2013).

Employees' perceptions of CSR initiatives are shaped by various individual factors, signaling the need for microlevel understanding in CSR research. The current literature indicates that these perceptions can differ significantly based on age, gender, education level, location, income, and marital status (Lu et al., 2017; Rosati et al., 2018). The highlighted microlevel gap reveals a lack of understanding about how individuals' psychological influences affect organizational outcomes (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Gond et al., 2017; Rupp et al., 2015). Additionally, the introduction of stakeholder theory broadened the discourse on CSR to include multiple viewpoints based on different stakeholder perspectives (Freeman & Dmytriiev, 2017; Wong & Bustami, 2020). While the research has been mainly organization-centric, the emergence of theories focusing on individuals within organizational settings has increased the focus on the value of microfoundational studies in CSR research.

The complexity of stakeholder responses to CSR impacts organizational performance and has given rise to micro-CSR studies. While positive stakeholder engagement can improve the economic, social, and environmental aspects of CSR (Margolis & Walsh, 2003; Van der Byl & Slawinski, 2015), reactions from customers and employees can vary widely because of different environmental and personal factors. In some cases, CSR initiatives have led to negative stakeholder perceptions (Carnahan et al., 2017; Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). Within this complex landscape, the emerging field of micro-CSR is gaining traction. According to Gond and Moser (2021), two main streams divide this new area: psychological microfoundations, examining individual perceptions and

reactions to CSR in the workplace, and sociological microfoundations, driven by broader societal factors like social pressure and climate change awareness.

Incorporating micro-CSR perspectives is crucial for a more comprehensive understanding of CSR's impact and effectiveness. While traditional CSR studies often focus on macro-and mesolevels, they risk overlooking the individual experiences most directly affected by these initiatives (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Rupp et al., 2015). Including the viewpoints of individual stakeholders, such as employees, can enrich our understanding of CSR and its diverse effects (Girschik et al., 2020). Recent research has also pointed to individual-level differences in responses to CSR initiatives, which can create organizational tension and undesirable outcomes (Gond et al., 2017). A deeper exploration of the micro-CSR perspective is required to address these challenges. Identifying and resolving potential conflicts within organizations will not only be assisted by this approach but also promote a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of CSR, benefiting all stakeholders.

A multidimensional approach to CSR research enhances its effectiveness and inclusivity. As the focus on CSR continues to grow in the modern business landscape, it has become increasingly important to employ a multidimensional approach that considers macro-, meso-, and microperspectives (Langenus & Dooms, 2015; Martínez-Martínez et al., 2017). By adopting this comprehensive lens, organizations can create CSR initiatives that benefit the larger society and individual members (Barnett et al., 2020). CSR's influence extends beyond organizational boundaries, impacting both societal relationships and the experiences of individuals within these institutions. Developing a more effective and inclusive approach to CSR initiatives is possible through an integrated understanding of these impacts.

In conclusion, CSR impacts the broader business landscape, societal relationships, and individuals within organizations. The concluding remarks emphasize acknowledging and studying these diverse impacts, paving the way for more effective and inclusive CSR initiatives.

## **2.5 Positioning of the studies**

This section discusses how my empirical works fit within the micro-CSR literature. It also specifies the positioning of each article, including a detailed description of the employed microfoundational perspectives and interpretations. I explain each study's focus on microfoundations and state my stance on Coleman's bathtub model. Table 2 provides a comprehensive summary of each paper's positioning.

### **Article I: A systematic literature review on employee relations with CSR: State of art and future research agenda**

This literature review is rooted in recognizing employees as key CSR stakeholders. The literature frequently asserts that employees are critical

stakeholders in the practical implementation of CSR initiatives (Carroll, 1999; Preusset et al., 2009). Moreover, stakeholders, including employees, are expected to play a significant role in urging organizations to act responsibly (Aguilera et al., 2007). However, employees often face limitations in implementing or endorsing an organization's CSR policy (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2010), suggesting a more intricate role for CSR than initially conceived. Employees' CSR roles are multifaceted and significant. They may contribute to supporting CSR, assisting in its implementation, observing its impacts or lack thereof, evaluating CSR strategies, and exerting pressure on organizations while influencing CSR regulations. Despite these critical roles, the interactions between employees and CSR remain underexplored.

This study adopts a comprehensive approach to exploring the relationship between management and employees regarding CSR. By examining the CSR-employee literature through a broader lens, this study aims to delve deeper into the intricate relationship between management perspectives and employees' views on CSR, thereby enriching the current understanding of the topic.

## **Article II: From compliance to potential for dynamic institutional transformation: Employee perspectives on corporate social responsibility regulation in India**

This study addresses the existing knowledge gap concerning the impact of regulations and policies on integrating CSR functions as a mandatory feature of the organization. It delves into the microfoundations of CSR regulations, highlighting the role of employees in interpreting and implementing these regulations within the organization and generating feedback for future updates on CSR regulations (Abbott et al., 2017; Gond et al., 2022). This focus enables the generation of valuable feedback for both organizational and governmental institutions. This study reveals the balance between uniformity and diversity concerning mandatory CSR regulation, with specific attention paid to the local context within India.

With my co-author, I shed light on the communication perspective by focusing on generating feedback for developing future CSR regulations. We examined employees' thought patterns and mental frameworks regarding national CSR regulations, which they implement as part of the organization's collective effort (Haack et al., 2019). We examined how individual employees interpret CSR regulations in the context of their roles in organizational CSR initiatives.

This study interprets microfoundations as distinct levels of engagement in CSR (Haack et al., 2019). On a broad scale, governmental institutions formulate CSR regulations, organizations devise CSR policies to comply with these regulations, and employees act as intermediaries in implementing these policies (Abbott et al., 2017). Employees also generate feedback for both the organization and governmental institutions, which can inform future amendments to regulations (Gond & Moser, 2021). The study further explores sociological microfoundations, investigating how individual employees perceive their social



reality and how this perception informs their feedback on existing CSR regulations.

In Coleman's (1990) bathtub model, the study first focuses on Arrow 1, observing employees' interpretations of mandatory CSR regulations. It then concentrates on Arrow 2, observing the uniformity and diversity in current CSR regulations and delivering tangible feedback. The findings underline the importance of localized changes tailored to specific geographies, challenging the notion of a singular CSR regulation applicable to the entire nation.

### **Article III: Rationality, experiences, or identity work? Sensemaking of emotionally tense experiences of organizational sustainability**

Previous research suggests that employees' emotional engagement with CSR can differ substantially, potentially leading to emotional exhaustion that is detrimental to individuals and organizations. This study delves into the microfoundations of organizations, examining how individuals interpret and defend their personal experiences concerning their organization's external sustainability reputation (Gond et al., 2022). It identifies various strategies employees adopt to manage their emotions and discusses the organizational implications of these tactics.

This study adopts a cognitive perspective to explore individual employees' emotional responses to their organizations' sustainability reputation (Haack et al., 2019). It seeks to comprehend how employees make sense of their emotions, personal experiences, and perceptions of organizational efforts in light of externally perceived sustainability reputation. The study interprets microfoundations as a mechanism through which employees interact with their organization's external and internal environments, relying on their cognition and judgment to understand and respond to their emotional reactions (Haack et al., 2019). This study also emphasizes the psychological microfoundations of CSR, highlighting the diversity of cognitive strategies employees adopt to manage their emotional responses to challenging sustainability-related situations at work (Gond & Moser, 2021).

Guided by Coleman's (1990) bathtub model, this study concentrates on Arrow 1, mainly how employees cognitively process their emotional stress and defend their experiences when interacting with larger stakeholder groups. By investigating how employees navigate their emotions concerning their organization's sustainability reputation, this study adds valuable insights into the understanding of the microfoundations of CSR.

Table 2 Microfoundational grounding and placement of the research agenda on Coleman’s bathtub diagram

<b>Article</b>	<b>Issues addressed</b>	<b>Microfoundational Perspective</b>	<b>Microfoundational interpretation</b>	<b>Microfoundational Focus</b>	<b>Placement on Coleman’s Model</b>
I	A comprehensive literature review on employee-CSR relationships	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Arrows 1,2,3,4
II	This study investigates employees’ microlevel perspectives on national CSR regulations	Communicative perspective	Microfoundations as level	Sociological microfoundations	Arrows 1 & 2
III	This study investigates employee engagement in emotionally tense situations arising from stakeholders’ critical judgment of organizational CSR initiatives	Cognitive perspective	Microfoundations as mechanism	Psychological microfoundations	Arrow 1

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

In the methodology section of my doctoral thesis, I delve deeper into the methodological underpinnings of this study. Discussing the philosophical stance guiding my approach toward understanding the research questions is essential (Lincoln et al., 2011). In the following section, I describe and justify my choice of pragmatism as the research philosophy of this study. This comprehensive and practical approach provides the foundation for the research design, data collection, and analysis processes, ultimately offering valuable insights into the complex dynamics of the research domain. Furthermore, this section describes the methodological choices and data collection techniques employed for each article in this thesis, demonstrating how these decisions contribute to the coherence, rigor, and credibility of the investigation.

#### **3.1 Pragmatism research philosophy**

This research on employee experiences concerning micro-CSR within organizational CSR initiatives is grounded in the philosophical approach of pragmatism, as initially conceived by James (1907) and Dewey (1938) and further developed in recent studies. Recent studies, including those by Talisse and Aikin (2008), Elkjaer and Simpson (2011), Farjoun et al. (2015), Korte and Mercurio (2017), and Kelly and Cordeiro (2020) have affirmed the relevance of pragmatism. Each of these contributions has expanded our understanding of the concept.

Pragmatic research philosophy, which emphasizes the role of theories in facilitating practical action, informs the methodology of this study. It recognizes the existence of diverse approaches to comprehending global phenomena and conducting research, asserting that no single theory or perspective can provide an exhaustive representation of reality (Saunders et al., 2012). The pragmatic approach shifts the focus from purely epistemological considerations to seeking practical means to answer research questions and devise pertinent solutions (Wicks & Freeman, 1998). This emphasis on practicality supports a shift away

from the rigid generalizations informed by natural science-based models of social science.

This pragmatic paradigm is especially relevant for organizational studies because it focuses on business operations' practical implications and complexities (Dmytriiev et al., 2017). Kelly and Cordeiro (2020) broadly conceptualize pragmatism as a philosophical and epistemological framework that assesses ideas and beliefs based on their practical operations. Modern organizational research has recognized the limitations of a single theoretical approach solely focused on pragmatism and acknowledged the need for integrating traditional theories to address the complexities of contemporary organizational structures (Adler & Heckscher, 2018; Christensen & Raynor, 2003; Örtenblad et al., 2016). Farjoun et al. (2015) argued that pragmatism provides a more holistic and realistic viewpoint on human behavior than rationalist and structuralist perspectives. The idea that knowledge continually evolves from human experiences is central to pragmatist epistemology. Pragmatism contends that social experiences mold the perceptions of the organizational environment (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019).

Applying pragmatism to microfoundational studies offers unique advantages for understanding organizational change and agency-structure dynamics. Although pragmatism has been criticized (Denzin, 2010; Hesse-Biber, 2015; Morgan, 2014), its application to microfoundational studies is particularly beneficial. This approach echoes the concepts of practice theorists, such as Giddens (1979, 1984), who drew inspiration from pragmatic thinking. Although Giddens' structuration model serves as a valuable tool to address agency-structure tension in organizational theory (Powell & Colyvas, 2008), it may limit multilevel theorizing and complicate the understanding of organizational change (Farjoun et al., 2015). Pragmatism's fluid and recursive perception of levels offers unique opportunities to make microfoundational studies more macro and strategic. Organizations can utilize power and navigate strategically, influencing restricting factors and limitations in their environments. In contrast to Giddens's model, which emphasizes social structures as enablers and facilitators of change, pragmatism highlights creativity, skill, sensemaking, and collective agency through deliberation (Ansell, 2011).

Finally, the value of pragmatism in organizational research extends to addressing complex issues, such as CSR and climate change pressures. By recognizing the creative potential of employees to tackle multifaceted problems internally and externally, pragmatism provides a practical and profound perspective on human behavior that can guide organizations in navigating climate change and CSR challenges. Its capacity to manage dualism, temporality, and historical uncertainty positions pragmatism as a valuable research paradigm for complex studies related to individual behavior and the evolving organizational environment. Consequently, this research proposes pragmatism as the ideal philosophical foundation for this thesis. Despite criticism, the principles of pragmatism center on practical contributions that can evolve and address the critical and practical problems faced by practitioners (Dmytriiev et

al., 2017; Freeman et al., 2020; Kaushik & Walsh, 2019; Wicks & Freeman, 1998). By acknowledging the significance of practical contributions and the role of individual beliefs and experiences, a pragmatic approach may provide a more comprehensive and realistic perspective on human behavior and organizational life.

### **3.2 Methodological choices**

This section presents this doctoral thesis's chosen qualitative research methodology and clarifies its relevance in exploring the research questions. This methodology permits the investigation of novel and complex phenomena, allowing the use of diverse research methods that align with pragmatist philosophy. A comprehensive literature review was undertaken to capture up-to-date insights into the relationship between employees and CSR, highlighting the gaps and rapid progress in this field. Despite the wealth of extant literature, there needs to be more literature covering aspects of the bottom-up approach. The review further informed the study's approach, adopting qualitative inductive research methods that focus on micro-CSR aspects. This approach provides a nuanced understanding of the role of employees in CSR.

The qualitative research methodology recommended by Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) offers a robust framework for probing and understanding novel and intricate phenomena. This methodology underpins the investigations presented in this thesis, augmenting our ability to construct an in-depth understanding of the research context. Individual studies contributing to this thesis were predicated on this qualitative methodology, demonstrating its broad utility in studying complex phenomena. The strength of qualitative methodology lies in its inherent versatility, which enables a broad spectrum of research methods for exploration and analysis. In conjunction with pragmatist philosophy (Farjoun et al., 2015; Freeman et al., 2020), this approach encourages a pluralistic research viewpoint, thus facilitating the generation of an intricate and in-depth understanding of the research topic. This blend of pragmatism and qualitative research methodology was critical in executing the individual studies in this thesis.

Executing diverse qualitative methods in these studies was not merely a methodological decision but a strategic choice intended to foster a comprehensive understanding of the thesis topic. The adaptable nature of the qualitative approach facilitates a thorough exploration of the research issue, culminating in a holistic comprehension of the phenomenon under investigation. Therefore, by intertwining pragmatist philosophy and qualitative research methodology, this thesis achieves a comprehensive analysis and a deep understanding of the research topic.

A thorough literature review was conducted to understand the relationship between employees and CSR. This review addresses the first subquestion (RQ1), exploring how the employee-CSR relationship is represented in the literature

and identifying existing patterns. Given the rapid development in employee-CSR research, it is imperative to incorporate recent advancements and studies to maintain an updated view of the subject matter. This exercise facilitated a panoramic view of previous studies (Short, 2009), offering insightful contributions to this thesis.

Previous literature reviews conducted by Boyd and Gessner (2013), Voegtlin and Greenwood (2016), Francoeur et al. (2019), and Norton et al. (2015) substantially contributed to our understanding of the employee-CSR relationship. This expanding segment of organizational research has observed significant growth. During the initial stages of my research, I made a notable observation by identifying approximately 100 studies published in 2017 and 2018 that shed light on the employee-CSR relationship. These studies had not yet been incorporated into a comprehensive literature review. Motivated by this observation of opportunities and challenges, I and my co-author undertook a literature review to examine how employees have been studied in organizational CSR. This effort resulted in a comprehensive understanding of the employee-CSR relationship derived from recent literature.

In the literature review, it is evident that there is a need for more diverse theoretical frameworks for comprehending the role of employees in the context of CSR. Furthermore, the use of various research methodologies to investigate such connections has been limited (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). This observation highlights the need for a more comprehensive understanding and is a rationale for incorporating theories related to individuals across diverse disciplines. These encompass organizational behavior, agency, psychology, social networking, and structure (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Including such theories increases the possibility of developing a framework to manage an organization's CSR initiatives and understanding its micro-CSR context.

Consequently, this study adopts qualitative inductive research methods (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008), focusing on individual employees to examine the microfoundational aspects of micro-CSR. The decision to employ this approach enables us to address the second subquestion (RQ2), which seeks to understand the microlevel perspectives on CSR relative to macrolevel CSR regulations. This study uses an inductive approach coupled with thematic analysis to contribute to the growing theme of employee diversity in the realm of CSR (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The primary objective is to identify and understand the differences among employees concerning CSR implementation within this context.

This study utilizes qualitative inductive methods to delve into the nuances of employee diversity and its interplay with CSR within specific contexts, providing valuable insights into a largely unexplored area of research. This approach facilitates the examination of the third subquestion (RQ3), which explores how employees navigate and resolve emotionally charged situations arising from their CSR endeavors. An in-depth analysis of individual employees

offers a more nuanced understanding of employees' sensemaking techniques to manage CSR-related stress in complex situations.

In conclusion, this study's comprehensive use of qualitative research methodology facilitates a deep and holistic understanding of the employee-CSR relationship. The literature review highlights the rapid growth and development of nuances in the field, underscoring the need for a fresh perspective and diversified theoretical approaches. The scarcity of diverse theoretical frameworks and research methodologies allows this study to adopt an inductive approach with thematic analysis, enriching our understanding of employee diversity within CSR implementation. By focusing on individual employees and their roles in CSR, this study offers significant insights into micro-CSR and contributes to the burgeoning body of knowledge in the field. These unique insights underpin the necessity of comprehensive and diverse research methodologies to understand complex phenomena in organizational studies.

### **3.3 Research material and analysis**

This section presents the methodology and three distinct datasets used for a comprehensive analysis of diversity within organizations in the context of micro-CSR. While each study within the dissertation has unique research objectives, they offer interconnected viewpoints that enrich our understanding of employee diversity and provide pragmatic recommendations for CSR implementation. Table 3 provides a detailed breakdown of each study's data generation and analysis methods, emphasizing their contributions to a more diverse and inclusive approach to CSR.

Table 3 Detailing the data generation and analysis methods used

Study	Data generation	Data analysis	Level of analysis
Article I: A systematic literature review on employee relations with CSR: State of art and future research agenda	A systematic collection of scholarly articles on employee-CSR relationship published between 1990 and 2018 (n = 331)	Content classification thematic analysis	Theoretical foundation
Article II: Microlevel CSR Perspectives to Macro-level Regulations: Interplay between Uniformity and Diversity	Personal interviews and qualitative survey of employees' responses about India's mandatory CSR regulation (n = 152)	Qualitative inductive analysis using Gioia et al. (2013)'s three-stage data analysis	Individual employees
Article III: Rationality, experiences, or identity work? Sensemaking of emotionally tense experiences of organizational sustainability	Personal interviews around employees' emotional sensemaking of external sustainability reputation (n = 25)	Qualitative inductive analysis using Gioia et al. (2013)'s three-stage data analysis	Individual employees



### **3.3.1 Article I: A systematic literature review on employee relations with CSR: State of art and future research agenda**

An extensive literature review was conducted that focused on existing research on the CSR–employee relationship. A transparent and reproducible evaluation of the current literature was conducted using systematic literature review techniques. This method adheres to Wolfswinkel et al.'s (2013) recommendations, endorsing inductive research techniques and fostering the development of pertinent models and theories.

In the literature review, I defined six stages. Initially, I set criteria for selecting relevant articles, emphasizing peer-reviewed English journals from various disciplines. The second stage involved a comprehensive search of relevant terms on Web of Science and Scopus, yielding 1,772 articles. Further refinement of the dataset led to a collection of 331 articles that highlighted employees as the central theme of the study. The fourth stage involved selective coding of the articles, aiding the identification of patterns, and grouping studies into categories. I described the categories in the fifth stage, a topic I detail in Chapter 4. The final stage reflected the implications of the study and suggested directions for future research.

I identified various methodological and theoretical approaches in the reviewed articles, noting that quantitative methods were dominant, while qualitative or mixed-method techniques were also used. Despite a fragmented theoretical framework landscape due to the absence of specific theories, social identity theory has emerged as a critical theory in research on the employee–CSR relationship. The scope of the studies covered different industries and countries, with an evident prevalence in the manufacturing sector and European countries. This systematic review methodology ensured the credibility and reliability of the findings, providing a robust basis for further exploration in this doctoral thesis.

This study utilized a systematic literature review to investigate the state-of-the-art and future research directions for the employee–CSR relationship. This entailed collecting and analyzing 331 scholarly articles published between 1990 and 2018, aiming to develop a theoretical framework for the relationship. The review presented a broad spectrum of perspectives, identifying areas for further research and setting the stage for future breakthroughs in understanding the employee–CSR relationship.

### **3.3.2 Study II: From compliance to potential for dynamic institutional transformation: Employee perspectives on corporate social responsibility regulation in India**

The second article focuses on the exploration of an empirical study. This study examines employee perspectives on mandatory CSR regulations and seeks to offer feedback to governments and corporations regarding these regulations and their execution. Attention is centered on employees' comprehension of CSR. This factor significantly influences their preference for mandatory CSR regulations and their implementation, particularly in the context of recent amendments to

mandatory CSR expenditure laws. To pursue this objective, an inductive qualitative approach was employed, which involved the analysis of interview data and the qualitative survey responses of Indian employees.

Data collection was initiated as part of a comprehensive project aimed at understanding the CSR microfoundations of Indian corporations. The data-gathering process encompassed two phases: semi-structured interviews and qualitative surveys. The first phase involved 16 interviews with employees across various industries using purposeful sampling to select employees from corporations impacted by Clause 135 of the Companies Act 2013. The second phase involved developing a qualitative survey based on the results of the first-phase analysis. The survey was then administered to the employees of two Indian steel manufacturing companies, generating 136 valuable responses. Including interview and survey responses, the study gathered 152 datasets, providing a rich data pool for analyzing employees' expectations concerning CSR regulation within industries heavily contributing to climate change.

According to Gioia et al.'s (2013) proposition, data analysis was conducted in three stages. The process involved reading interview transcripts, performing a preliminary three-stage analysis of the interviews alone, and developing a qualitative survey based on the insights from this analysis. A qualitative survey focuses more on the diversity of responses than on distribution within a population (Jansen, 2010). This approach is valuable for exploring employees' experiences (Fink, 2003) and enables the collection of rich qualitative data from a large participant pool. Following the survey, the data were analyzed concerning the initial analysis results, leading to the final three-stage analysis.

Employees' understanding of CSR has significantly influenced their perceptions of CSR implementation. Differences in the understanding of corporate CSR spending allocation at both the national regulatory and corporate levels were also evident. These observations deepened our knowledge of the implementation of mandatory CSR regulations in India, thus aiding in the development of feedback to refine these regulations for improved, mutually beneficial outcomes for corporations and society.

In summary, the second article examines the interaction between uniformity and diversity in the context of India's mandatory CSR regulations. The study employed personal interviews and a qualitative survey to collect data from 152 employees and used a three-stage data analysis approach developed by Gioia et al. (2013) to explore individual employees' perspectives on regulations.

### **3.3.3 Article III: Rationality, experiences, or identity work? Sensemaking of emotionally tense experiences of organizational sustainability**

The third article focused on executing an empirical study, the primary aim of which was to investigate how employees engage in sensemaking to resolve emotionally charged situations tied to organizational CSR. There needed to be a greater understanding of the strategies employees adopt to handle such emotionally tense circumstances concerning CSR. The research thus aimed to bridge this gap. The focal point of this study was a northern European energy

company with a solid commitment to sustainability, albeit plagued by a poor public reputation.

The research employed a case study methodology. Twenty-five employees with experience in the company's sustainability work, encompassing both managerial and expert roles, were interviewed. The selection of interviewees was coordinated with company representatives to ensure that individuals with experience and knowledge of sustainability in the organization were included. The participants comprised employees from two tiers of the organizational hierarchy: managers, such as heads of finance, human resources, and communications, and experts, such as environmental engineers, environmental health and safety managers, and business development managers.

The interviews spanned four central themes: job descriptions, viewpoints on sustainability within the organization, and internal and external sustainability management and communication. These themes were examined in the context of the employee's daily tasks, enabling an in-depth exploration of their perspectives. To facilitate data interpretation, Gioia et al.'s (2013) four-stage data analysis process was utilized with the aid of Atlas.ti software.

The analysis began with developing detailed descriptions of the interviewees' emotionally charged experiences and identifying first-order concepts. The coded segments for each first-order concept were compared in the second stage, leading to the emergence of second-order concepts. These highlighted differences in how emotions were connected to tense experiences. The third stage integrated the previous stages with sensemaking theory, scrutinizing how sensemaking mechanisms were used to resolve and rationalize emotionally tense experiences. Three emotionally driven categories surfaced: defending pride, maintaining pride, and settling with satisfaction.

In summary, the third article delved into the sensemaking of emotionally charged experiences related to organizational sustainability. By conducting personal interviews with 25 employees, the study collected data regarding their emotional sensemaking of external sustainability reputation. This research applied Gioia et al.'s (2013) three-stage data analysis method to understand better individual employee experiences concerning sustainability.

## **4 REVIEWING THE CONTRIBUTION OF INDIVIDUAL STUDIES**

This chapter delves into a comprehensive exploration of the three constituent articles of this thesis, with a concentrated emphasis on their respective research outcomes. The overarching objective is to engage with the unique research questions posed by each study, as individual inquiries are designed to reinforce macro-CSR initiatives through a micro-CSR lens. This analysis aligns with the broader research goal of how organizations comprehend and accommodate employee diversity to implement CSR initiatives effectively. In addition, this chapter discusses the findings of these studies through a prism of five discerned themes.

### **4.1 Study I: A systematic literature review on employee relations with CSR: State of art and future research agenda**

This thesis begins with an elaborate literature review, meticulously analyzing the relationship between employees and CSR initiatives, as investigated in the literature. Central to this review is the quest to understand the reciprocal influence between employees and organizational CSR activities. Three different categories of studies focus on employee-CSR relationships.

The first category delves into the organizational implementation of CSR. Studies in this category view CSR as a top-down phenomenon managed by organizational leadership, with a significant emphasis on developing a universal commitment to CSR across the organization. Two distinct subcategories have emerged from this body of work. The first subcategory focuses on developing and nurturing shared meanings and values related to CSR within organizations. It also explores how employees actualize CSR policies in their everyday work and the role of congruence between organizational and employee values in promoting CSR engagement. The second subcategory investigates the mechanism by which employees play a part in implementing CSR policies and

how these policies gain acceptance and become prevalent throughout the organization. These studies emphasize the critical roles of effective communication, green HRM practices, and supportive leadership in driving employee engagement with CSR initiatives.

The second category highlights the benefits reaped by organizations from their CSR efforts. This category revolves around organizational benefits derived from employee engagement in CSR activities. This study analyzes the advantages of employee–CSR engagement for organizations, focusing on aspects such as strengthening the organization–employee relationship, generating positive outcomes for employees in their work and personal lives, enhancing the reputation of the organization, and improving performance at both the organizational and individual employee levels.

The third category investigates CSR from an individual perspective. Here, studies explore employees' multifarious perceptions of CSR and the factors contributing to these differences. Research in this category indicates that employees assign varied meanings to CSR, which can introduce complexity and tension when implementing CSR initiatives within an organization. Such studies delve into the individual identities, stakeholder roles, and microcontextual elements that impact employees' CSR perceptions.

Intermediary studies act as bridges that link the main categories. These studies underline the influence of higher-level organizational CSR practices on employees' perceptions, experiences, and the degree of fit between employees and the organization's CSR values. Furthermore, they illustrate how a successful integration of CSR within an organization leads to tangible benefits, including heightened commitment, a sense of pride, and employees' willingness to impact their work positively.

In conclusion, the literature review comprehensively analyzes the diverse aspects of the employee–CSR relationship. It illuminates the various nuances of organizational implementation of CSR, accrued benefits to organizations, variations in CSR perceptions among employees, and intermediary studies that connect these categories. This review sets the stage for further in-depth research, paving the way for a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between employees and organizational CSR activities.

## **4.2 Article II: From compliance to potential for dynamic institutional transformation: Employee perspectives on corporate social responsibility regulation in India**

The current research aims to unravel employees' perceptions of compulsory CSR regulations in India and to provide suggestions for enhancing these regulations. Applying the regulatory intermediary theory (RIT) model, employees are seen as conduits between the government and organizations. By conducting 16 employee interviews and 136 online qualitative surveys, it was found that

employees broadly favor obligatory CSR regulations, although they discern specific inadequacies that necessitate amelioration. Identified frailties encompass the absence of flexibility for organizations to alter internal CSR expenditure, the lack of diversity in a national policy for a diverse country such as India, and insufficient provisions for prioritizing socioeconomically disadvantaged regions. This research underscores the importance of improving employee perceptions when devising and modifying CSR regulations.

Three central themes emerged from the empirical investigation: endorsement of mandatory CSR regulations, lack of flexibility in CSR regulations, and a deficiency of diversity in regulatory policy.

Most employees supported obligatory CSR regulations, viewing them as essential for organizations to mitigate deleterious societal and environmental impacts. However, conflicts have emerged due to differing opinions about the flexibility of CSR spending and the necessity of diversity in regulatory policies to cater to disparate regional needs. Inflexibility in CSR regulations was a particular area of contention for employees who advocated for greater organizational autonomy in dictating CSR budget allocation. Anxiety was rife owing to the rigidity of CSR standards, especially concerning CSR expenditures. While many employees acknowledged the significance of CSR regulations in addressing global issues, they concurrently endorsed that regulations permit firms to engage in targeted CSR endeavors within their organizations.

Employees also advocated enhanced diversity in regulatory policies to cater to distinct regional needs and prioritize CSR expenditure for socioeconomically disadvantaged areas. In conclusion, it was found that individual employees' perceptions of CSR regulations varied and were influenced by the specific context. This study recommends that local and regional governments have the power to modify national CSR regulations based on their priorities and that CSR spending should reflect the diverse needs of different regions.

Unearthing differences in employees' perceptions of CSR regulations can be invaluable for generating feedback for organizations and governments. This study highlights the tension between the need for consistency in CSR initiatives across all organizations operating within the country and the demand for more flexible and context-sensitive CSR approaches considering regional and local issues. Furthermore, employees experience tension due to the inflexibility of CSR standards, particularly concerning CSR expenditure. By understanding and addressing these tensions, organizations, and governments can augment the effectiveness and impact of their CSR initiatives while fostering greater stakeholder engagement and satisfaction.

This study makes several contributions to the literature. First, it emphasizes the role of obligatory CSR regulations in fostering consistency in CSR initiatives across organizations, a deviation from the traditional conceptualization of CSR as a voluntary activity. Second, it contextualizes the RIT model to the micro-CSR literature by crafting a multilevel analysis of obligatory CSR regulations from a stakeholder-as-intermediary perspective. Third, it highlights the tug-of-war between uniformity and flexible, contextualized CSR approaches and how such

a struggle can be regulated. Finally, the study identifies shortcomings in the prevailing mandatory CSR regulations, furnishing practical suggestions for ameliorating mandatory CSR regulations in India and imparting knowledge to other regulatory bodies globally, considering the implementation of obligatory CSR regulations.

### **4.3 Article III: Rationality, experiences, or identity work? Sensemaking of emotionally tense experiences of organizational sustainability**

The overarching aim of this research is to explore the techniques employed by employees to navigate emotionally charged situations related to organizational CSR and to elucidate the consequent impact on their involvement in CSR activities. To address this knowledge gap, this research involved interviews with 25 employees who had experienced emotionally charged CSR-related situations in their professional lives. This study yields valuable insights into the intricacies of CSR-related sensemaking and its ramifications on employees' engagement with CSR activities. To mitigate the emotionally charged encounters tied to organizational CSR, employees utilize distinct sensemaking mechanisms: rational sensemaking, experiential sensemaking, and identity work as a form of emotional sensemaking.

Rational sensemaking is deployed when employees deal with a substantial inconsistency between their sense of pride and the negative perceptions of external stakeholders. Employees strive to uphold their pride and advocate enhanced communication and proactive stakeholder engagement by utilizing facts, figures, and achievements. Rational sensemaking propels employees to rectify the company's negative image and bolster CSR performance. However, they frequently encounter opposition from external stakeholders, who might need to be more amenable to communication initiatives.

Experiential sensemaking entails shifting focus from external negativity to internal emotionally positive experiences, enabling employees to preserve their pride. Employees share narratives highlighting their positive encounters with CSR practices and strategic prioritization within the organization. Experiential sensemaking is generally employed when tensions are moderate and external negativity is less severe. While it may not necessarily instigate change, it underlines extensive organizational commitment to CSR, permitting employees to operate within shared directives.

Identity work serves as a sensemaking mechanism that assists employees in reconciling contradictory perceptions and alleviating emotional tensions by invoking internal and external limitations on CSR. Employees construct a "light green" personal and organizational identity, aligning individual and organizational values. They acknowledge the substantial environmental impact of their industry but underscore their endeavors to conduct operations

sustainably and efficiently. This sensemaking approach results in relatively low tension, neutrality, and acceptance of the organization's poor external CSR reputation within the industry.

Collectively, these sensemaking mechanisms highlight the complexity and diversity inherent in human cognition in response to emotionally charged situations. Furthermore, this study posits that disparate cognitive approaches may yield varying degrees of action, engagement, and critical evaluation of CSR practices. In summary, this study underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing the emotional tensions experienced by employees concerning organizational CSR. This study offers valuable insights into the emotional dynamics and employee participation in organizational CSR initiatives by delving into the different sensemaking mechanisms that employees utilize to resolve these tensions (rational sensemaking, experiential sensemaking, and identity work).

#### **4.4 Synthesis of significant themes in the studies**

This section focuses on the discussion surrounding the critical themes identified in this thesis, particularly highlighting the research trends observed in cognitive and emotional logic. The text outlines five core aspects for exploration, which I derived from the analysis of the three articles. These aspects encompass 1) the variability in human cognitive processes, 2) the role of emotional sensemaking in perception formation, 3) navigating tensions and complexities: a bottom-up approach to CSR implementation, 4) improved CSR outcomes through a multilevel approach to management, and 5) the conveyance of critical information through feedback loops. Although identified as independent, these themes show significant interconnections, emphasizing their mutual dependence within broader discourse. Thus, a deeper understanding of micro-CSR can improve macro-level CSR initiatives.

##### **4.4.1 Variability in human cognitive processes**

The overarching theme of the three articles is the complex variability in human cognitive processes, especially as they relate to perceptions, actions, and interpretations of CSR. All three articles offer significant insights into employees' complicated cognitive and emotional responses to CSR. These responses are not just surface-level reactions but also play a fundamental role in shaping the efficacy of CSR initiatives within organizations. Acknowledging and managing this diversity of thought and feeling is crucial for navigating the complexities of CSR implementation and crafting CSR strategies that are genuinely effective.

Article I reveal a broad range of meanings, practices, and conceptualizations that employees associate with CSR, suggesting a multiplicity of viewpoints that must be considered when implementing any CSR initiative. This spectrum of perspectives implies that a one-size-fits-all approach to CSR is



likely ineffective. Article II goes a step further by examining how employees' cognitive diversity extends to more pragmatic concerns, such as regulations related to CSR. This study suggests that individual perceptions, shaped by personal values and the degree of engagement with CSR initiatives, can substantially impact how these regulations are received and acted upon within an organization. In other words, an employee's mindset can be either a facilitator or a barrier to effectively implementing CSR policies.

Article III provides another layer by unraveling employees' coping mechanisms to make sense of emotionally charged experiences tied to CSR, such as rational sensemaking, experiential sensemaking, and identity work. These coping strategies are not merely reactive but influence how employees engage in CSR initiatives in the future. Employees' emotional and cognitive states do not just react to CSR policies; they actively shape them. These states can influence how policies are framed, communicated, and implemented within the organization.

In conclusion, a deep and nuanced understanding of employees' cognitive and emotional dynamics is paramount for the success of CSR strategies. This is not just a theoretical concern but has practical implications for how organizations design, adapt, and implement their CSR initiatives. By recognizing and addressing these complexities, organizations can better craft CSR strategies that are effective and resonate more profoundly with their employees, thereby enhancing overall outcomes.

#### **4.4.2 Fundamental role of emotional sensemaking in shaping perceptions**

The second theme focuses on how emotional sensemaking fundamentally shapes perceptions. This thesis emphasizes managing emotional responses from CSR-related tensions, as they directly affect employee well-being and overall efficacy. It closely examines the roles of employees' emotions in constructing feedback signals, mindfulness, and diverse employee perceptions. These elements collectively encourage adaptive responses to CSR. By studying emotions at the micro-foundation level, this thesis provides valuable insights into the emotional dynamics that propel employee engagement in CSR initiatives and influence sustainable business performance.

The complexities of CSR often introduce tensions that influence employees and organizations alike. These tensions give rise to various emotional responses that significantly affect well-being and effectiveness. My research highlights the positive impact of feedback signals and mindfulness on driving adaptive responses to CSR initiatives. Article II demonstrates that constructive engagement with feedback mechanisms can significantly uplift the emotional mindset of employees involved in CSR efforts. Article III examines how emotions play a critical role in navigating CSR tensions by offering an array of sensemaking mechanisms employees adopt to maneuver through emotionally intense CSR experiences. One such mechanism, which I term "identity work," aids employees in reconciling contrasting perceptions and alleviating emotional tensions by adopting a "light green" organizational and personal identity.

Understanding emotions at the microfoundational level within organizations is critical for tackling the dual challenges of climate change and profitability during CSR implementation. My investigation into the role of emotions reveals compelling relationships among employees' feelings, attitudes, and behaviors toward organizational CSR policies, which consequently affect sustainable business performance. I argue that addressing the emotional tensions connected to CSR is essential. In this context, I contribute to a new understanding of the emotional dynamics that underpin employee participation in CSR initiatives. My work exposes the complex and diverse cognitive responses to emotionally charged situations that influence action, engagement, and critical evaluation of CSR practices.

To fully comprehend the intricacies of emotional sensemaking, it is essential to examine the process of emotional cognition. Emotions play an indispensable role in human cognition by highlighting risks and opportunities while focusing on crucial issues. They also fuel the motivation to tackle challenges. Each emotion has its own unique patterns and motivational inclinations. Intriguingly, evidence points to a positive feedback loop where positive emotions can arise and encourage pro-environmental behavior.

In conclusion, my thesis underlines the urgent need to manage emotional responses to CSR-related tensions effectively, given their significant impact on employee well-being and efficacy. This study offers invaluable insights into the emotional dynamics that affect employee engagement in CSR initiatives and overall business sustainability. By understanding the role of emotions in human cognition and grappling with the complexity and diversity of human responses to emotionally charged situations, this research provides practical pathways for organizations to navigate the challenges of CSR implementation successfully. This study also potentially fosters a positive feedback loop for those committed to sustainable practices.

#### **4.4.3 Navigating tensions and complexities: A bottom-up approach to CSR implementation**

The central theme of this study focuses on how tension stimulates relational dynamics within an organization, urging a bottom-up approach to handling cognitive and emotional tensions. All three articles show that these tensions often stem from different employee perceptions and cultural factors. This study insists that organizations must balance the interests of various stakeholders, from shareholders and customers to governments and society. To effectively navigate these complexities, organizations should reorient themselves cognitively by placing CSR at the core of their operations. A detailed look at CSR's microfoundational aspects will guide the development of effective CSR strategies and foster sustainable business practices.

Given its increasing complexity, implementing CSR initiatives demands a more nuanced, bottom-up approach. Employees and managers serve as change agents who understand and balance various stakeholders' interests through direct interactions. Nonetheless, the range of cognitive abilities and perceptions

of employees can spark internal tensions and conflicts. Tensions also surface when organizations attempt to balance diverse stakeholder needs, including shareholders, customers, or governments. To address these challenges, organizations must accept these cognitive differences and stimulate a cognitive shift within the organization, starting from the ground up.

Article II also examines how local and regional needs, influenced by cultural and societal backgrounds, impact individual reactions to climate change and CSR. These varying needs can cause tension at the microfoundational level during the decision-making process and CSR implementation. Addressing these tensions requires understanding how individuals within organizations feel constrained or empowered by organizational structures. The study also explores the tensions arising from diverse opinions on CSR spending flexibility and the need for varied regulatory policies. Understanding employee perceptions can offer critical feedback to both organizations and governments. Finally, the study discusses the strategies employees use to resolve emotionally tense situations tied to organizational CSR, including those connected to stakeholder roles, individual identities, and microcontextual elements. This nuanced approach provides insight into the multifaceted effects of individual CSR perceptions, underscoring the need for a microlevel approach.

In summary, recognizing and managing the cognitive and emotional tensions that employees experience are crucial for successful CSR implementation. A detailed examination of these complexities will help organizations initiate a more effective bottom-up approach to CSR initiatives. Furthermore, understanding these intricacies will facilitate cognitive reorientation within the organization, leading to more fruitful CSR strategies and sustainable business operations.

#### **4.4.4 Enhanced CSR outcomes through a multilevel approach in management**

Broadening our perspective on CSR implementation enhances outcomes through a multilevel management approach. This approach advises against examining phenomena in isolation at a single level. Instead, it recommends focusing on interactions across multiple levels, such as individual, group, and organizational. This multilevel view allows for a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms driving stakeholder value through increased efficiency, innovation, and adaptability.

Articles II and III of this thesis emphasize the need for a multilevel approach to decipher the complexity of organizational phenomena. They explore how causality and feedback loops operate across different levels of analysis in the context of CSR.

Article II shows employees' critical role as intermediaries in implementing CSR initiatives. They bridge the gap between organizations and external stakeholders, such as governments, and offer firsthand insights into the effectiveness and practicality of mandatory CSR regulations. This feedback is

essential for refining and improving CSR regulations at multiple levels, leading to a better understanding of CSR implementation and its impact on stakeholders.

Article III focuses on the role of employee emotions in shaping phenomena at the organizational level, especially when an organization faces reputational challenges related to CSR. This study uses a multilevel approach to emphasize the context of organizational phenomena and how employees' emotional management strategies improve the organization's relationship with society. This study highlights the need to scrutinize microlevel behavioral processes and identify cross-level effects. This approach provides organizations valuable insights into the complex relationships among employees, organizations, and external stakeholders. It also facilitates the design of effective CSR strategies and practices.

Thus, a multilevel management approach can significantly improve CSR outcomes. By considering the perspectives and experiences of employees and examining the interactions among different levels, organizations can better understand the challenges related to CSR implementation. This comprehensive understanding can improve stakeholder relationships and lead to overall success in CSR initiatives.

#### **4.4.5 Importance of relevant information through feedback channels**

Feedback loops relay significant information that shapes the multifaceted dynamics of CSR. Understanding the complex relationship between employees and CSR initiatives is crucial in an ever-changing CSR environment. Multitiered communication significantly influences the CSR landscape. These dynamics can improve relationships among organizations, employees, and other vital stakeholders.

Employees' perspectives and experiences help us understand the complexities of CSR implementation and the role of feedback loops in successful CSR outcomes. Article II shows that employees are essential intermediaries in mandatory CSR regulations in India. Their feedback highlights the need for more flexibility in CSR spending and diverse national policies. It also focuses on the tension between uniformity and flexibility in CSR initiatives, suggesting the role of local and regional governments in moderating national CSR regulations.

Article III demonstrates that feedback is crucial to understanding how employees respond to emotionally charged CSR situations. Employees use various sensemaking mechanisms to navigate such situations. This feedback is invaluable for organizations seeking to refine their CSR strategies, engage employees effectively, and manage their societal reputations. Effective feedback communication is critical to understanding the complexities, implementation, and impact of CSR regulations on employees. When used effectively, this feedback can guide the development of more effective CSR initiatives and improve stakeholder engagement.

Combining the insights from Articles II and III indicates that employees play a vital role as intermediaries in mandatory CSR regulations and have emotions associated with CSR initiatives. It is essential to understand the impact

of emotions on organizational phenomena related to CSR and societal reputations. This combined view highlights the need for multilevel studies to understand CSR's complex relationships among employees, organizations, and external stakeholders. Effective feedback channels serve as essential conduits for relaying information, contributing to successful CSR implementation, and improving stakeholder relationships.

Summarizing the insights gained from this thesis, it becomes evident that employees are pivotal intermediaries in shaping CSR dynamics. Their feedback sheds light on the nuances of CSR implementation and plays a crucial role in navigating emotionally charged CSR situations. This finding highlights the importance of effective communication channels for relaying complex and multifaceted feedback. When such feedback is used constructively, it refines CSR strategies, enabling better stakeholder engagement and fostering a more nuanced understanding of CSR complexities. Therefore, in the broader scope of CSR research and practice, transparent, credible, and effective communication is not merely advantageous; it is indispensable for successfully implementing CSR initiatives and cultivating meaningful stakeholder relationships.

## 5 CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This section explores the theoretical contributions and practical implications of a research thesis focused on micro-CSR and the role of employees in its implementation. This thesis proposes a comprehensive meta-framework for organizations to optimize CSR by leveraging employee diversity. Furthermore, the validity and reliability of the research are assessed using a pragmatic approach to evaluate its real-world applicability and impact. The study also acknowledges its limitations, which should be addressed in the future.

### 5.1 Theoretical contribution

The discussion section examines the impact of the thesis on CSR, proposing a multifaceted approach that combines emotional, cognitive, and organizational aspects. It highlights five key contributions, shifting the discourse from top-down to bottom-up and emphasizing employees as agents of change. It bridges macro- and micro-analyses with a multilevel approach and introduces “cognitive organizational reorientation” to advocate for foundational CSR change. It also emphasizes local and cultural contexts in CSR decision-making, enriching academic discourse and practical applications. This thesis adopts a multidimensional approach to address the central research question: How can organizations effectively comprehend and accommodate employee diversity to implement CSR initiatives? By taking a pragmatic stance rooted in the philosophy of pragmatism, this research examines the microfoundational aspects of CSR, focusing on individual employee attitudes and their impact on broader organizational CSR implementation. This study unpacks the complexities of the employee-CSR relationship through a comprehensive literature review and two empirical case studies. It goes beyond traditional industrial psychology to explore how variations in individual attitudes can influence the execution of CSR strategies at both organizational and institutional levels.

The thesis is designed to contribute to a theoretical meta-framework that bridges micro-CSR initiatives and macro-CSR regulations, thereby enhancing the nuanced understanding of CSR from an individual perspective. The research reveals that recognizing and managing employee diversity is crucial for the success of CSR initiatives. By breaking down CSR to the microlevel and looking at individual attitudes, the study posits that organizations can tailor their CSR approaches more effectively, fulfilling their broader CSR objectives. By setting these boundaries, the research provides valuable insights that help organizations refine their CSR decision-making processes. It advocates for a more comprehensive and informed approach to CSR strategy formulation and implementation.

The first contribution of this thesis is its holistic approach to understanding CSR. Traditionally, CSR studies have often compartmentalized various elements, such as stakeholder relations, financial performance, and employee engagement, treating them as isolated variables. However, this thesis aims to provide an integrated perspective that combines emotional, cognitive, and organizational dynamics, thus enriching the knowledge of how CSR initiatives can be more effectively implemented and sustained.

CSR literature has traditionally been divided into economic (e.g., Friedman, 2007) and sociological (e.g., Carroll, 1991) perspectives. Studies have also focused on stakeholder engagement (Freeman, 1984) and strategic sustainability (Porter & Kramer, 2006), but these need to integrate the different aspects, especially the microfoundational aspects. Aguinis and Glavas (2012) proposed that CSR should be a core competency, but this approach overlooks employee emotions and cognitive tensions. This thesis seeks to fill this gap by creating a unified framework incorporating diverse elements, particularly employee emotions and cognitive tensions. CSR research is enriched by employee emotions and cognitive dynamics, which offer practical applications. Companies can benefit from understanding and responding to employee emotions, motivating them to impact society positively (Farooq & Salam, 2021). Cognitive tensions can help organizations manage competing objectives and priorities (Tarba et al., 2020). This thesis places the human factor at the center, connecting it to organizational objectives and stakeholder needs to create a more comprehensive CSR view. This approach adds complexity to CSR research, enabling more sustainable business practices, as Liboni et al. (2017) discussed. It also offers practical applicability, as organizations can create strategies that consider multiple variables and their interactions, leading to better CSR decision-making. This thesis broadens the existing CSR literature by integrating often overlooked employee emotions and cognitive dynamics. It provides a more comprehensive view than traditional compartmentalized perspectives.

In addition to the contributions from the articles, various scholars have emphasized how individual and collective cognitive frameworks guide actions within organizations (Cornelissen et al., 2015; Haack et al., 2019b). While this perspective is valuable, it has its critics. Some argue that such a cognitive focus may bypass the more nuanced social constructs that shape organizational

behavior (Cornelissen et al., 2015; Jepperson & Meyer, 2011; Suddaby, 2011). Despite this ongoing scholarly debate, one thing is clear: understanding and effectively managing the broad array of cognitive and emotional responses among employees is integral to overcoming the challenges organizations face during CSR initiatives' planning, implementation, and communication stages.

The second contribution of this thesis is its emphasis on employees as central agents of change in the implementation of CSR. Most CSR literature focuses on top-down strategies and decisions by executives or boards of directors. However, this thesis highlights the bottom-up approach, illuminating how employees contribute significantly to CSR outcomes through their cognitive and emotional experiences. This new focus helps explain the nuances involved in effective CSR implementation, emphasizing that employees are not mere implementers of CSR policies but active contributors to their success or failure.

As discussed, Deephouse and Jaskiewicz (2013) primarily concentrated on top-down strategies and policy implementation in CSR literature, emphasizing the roles of executives and boards. Middle management and employee roles in CSR implementation and experience should be addressed (Nazarov & Klarin, 2020). Most studies on employee-driven CSR focus on activities and results rather than cognitive and emotional elements (*ibid.*). This thesis seeks to bridge this gap by exploring CSR from the perspective of employee experience and cognitive processes. Employees can shape CSR outcomes through cognitive and emotional reactions. They argued that employees should be involved in CSR implementation, requiring an approach considering employee roles and emotions. This thesis also emphasizes the need to investigate the connections among employee emotion, cognition, and CSR initiatives. This thesis shifts the focus from top-down strategies to employee roles in CSR implementation and experience, in addition to the existing CSR literature. This study highlights the need to consider employees' cognitive and emotional aspects and how they affect CSR initiatives. This suggests more sophisticated and emotionally intelligent CSR strategies that recognize employees as agents of change.

The third contribution of this thesis is the introduction and advocacy of a multilevel approach to understanding and implementing CSR strategies. Many previous studies have confined their focus to the organizational or individual level, thereby missing the interconnectedness across levels. This thesis, however, emphasizes that successful CSR initiatives should not be viewed in isolation but should incorporate various interacting levels, such as individual, group, and organizational levels, for a more comprehensive understanding.

The traditional literature on CSR has often adopted an immovable approach, focusing either on macrolevel strategies involving the organization and its stakeholders (Carroll, 1991; Freeman, 1984) or on microlevel aspects, such as employee engagement and job satisfaction linked to CSR (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012, 2019). However, these studies have frequently overlooked the dynamic interactions among these levels, creating a segmented and incomplete view of CSR implementation. A few studies have touched upon multilevel analyses, but often as a secondary focus. For instance, studies that have examined cross-level



influences only sometimes make them the main focal point of the study (Hahn et al., 2018; Miska & Mendenhall, 2018). As a result, the richness that comes from understanding these cross-level interactions still needs to be explored. This thesis fills this gap by systematically applying a multilevel lens to CSR. It describes and substantiates through its case studies the effectiveness of multitiered approaches in CSR strategies. By highlighting the interactions among different management and implementation levels, this thesis argues for a more nuanced, interconnected view of CSR that considers the complexities inherent in balancing the interests of diverse stakeholders, from employees to governments to society. This thesis provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding CSR, extending beyond traditional single-level models. To truly embed CSR within an organization, we must acknowledge the intricate dance between its various levels. An integrated approach, recognizing this interdependence, unlocks more compelling and nuanced strategies.

The fourth essential contribution of this thesis is introducing the concept of “cognitive organizational reorientation” in the realm of CSR. This idea is particularly vital, as it highlights the necessity of changing policies or practices and the very cognitive frameworks that underpin these practices within an organization. Doing so paves the way for a more ingrained, effective, and sustainable implementation of CSR initiatives. CSR literature has usually concentrated on superficial changes, such as launching initiatives or engaging stakeholders (Carroll, 1990; Porter & Kramer, 2006). These are essential but often overlook the systemic changes needed for CSR to be effective. A few studies have examined this cognitive aspect, but usually in an isolated manner. Walsh (1995) and Daft and Weick (1984) studied organizational cognition but not in the CSR context. The traditional CSR literature has mainly focused on surface-level changes, such as stakeholder engagement and new programs (Deephouse & Jaskiewicz, 2013; Naghshineh et al., 2021). These efforts are essential, but they often neglect the systemic changes needed for CSR to be effective. There is a need for studies that focus on the cognitive side of organizational change, focusing on sensemaking in the CSR context (Mashne & Baracscai, 2020).

This thesis adds a new dimension to the CSR discourse by introducing the concept of cognitive organizational reorientation. Recent research has recognized that organizational cognition must shift to address workforce tensions and employees’ emotions (Mashne & Baracscai, 2020). This could explain why some CSR initiatives fail despite best practices and intentions. This paradigm opens new research possibilities in CSR, highlighting the need to consider organizational cognition when implementing CSR initiatives. This thesis combines the CSR literature and organizational cognition studies, stressing the need for cognitive organizational reorientation for successful CSR implementation. It provides case studies and empirical data to support this argument. This research offers new insights into understanding and improving CSR initiatives within organizations.

The fifth significant contribution of this thesis is the integration of local and cultural contexts into decision-making processes for CSR implementation.

By exploring how different cultural and regional nuances influence employees' perceptions of and reactions to CSR initiatives, this study provides a roadmap for more tailored and effective CSR strategies. Traditionally, CSR studies have been mainly conducted from a Western perspective, emphasizing universal principles and ignoring or underestimating the role of local and cultural contexts (Crane et al., 2008; Glavas, 2016; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007). Some studies have mentioned the importance of context, but usually as a secondary concern or complicated factor to be controlled for (Matten & Moon, 2008; Welford, 2005).

This study departs from the norm by emphasizing CSR implementation's local and cultural contexts. This reveals that one-size-fits-all approaches often fail because of a need for more sensitivity to the context. This thesis uses multiple case studies and data to demonstrate how understanding and incorporating local and cultural factors can lead to more successful and sustainable CSR results. This thesis challenges the standard, one-size-fits-all approach to CSR, urging us to embrace the importance of local and cultural considerations. Doing so gives us a more nuanced understanding of CSR, empowering organizations in diverse regions and cultures to develop effective strategies. Integrating cultural and local contexts directly into CSR frameworks enhances their theoretical soundness and practical effectiveness, leading to more impactful initiatives.

This thesis contributes to the literature on CSR by interlinking emotional understanding with other contextual factors at the individual and organizational levels. It builds upon existing academic paradigms and provides a pragmatic framework for businesses looking to implement more effective and nuanced CSR initiatives. Through its multifaceted and deeply integrated approach, it promises to substantially enrich both academic discourse and practical applications in the field of CSR.

## **5.2 Practical contribution**

This section presents the inclusive and collaborative CSR engagement meta-framework, a tool designed to optimize CSR by leveraging employee diversity. Created through the synthesis of three articles that form the basis of this thesis, the framework fills a gap in the existing literature by providing a holistic, seven-stage guide for organizations. This aligns with critical theories, such as Freeman's stakeholder theory (1984), and micro-CSR literature, such as Gond et al. (2017). It encourages organizations to focus on diverse human cognition, emotional intelligence, and tension management while advocating for agile, iterative approaches to CSR. In doing so, the framework offers a nuanced understanding of CSR dynamics, fostering more sustainable and responsible business practices.

This study presents a framework for incorporating employee diversity into CSR, emphasizing cognitive diversity and skills in emotion understanding, tension management, strategy assessment, change negotiation, and signal monitoring. Practitioners should use a flexible, iterative approach to address flaws, enabling agile decision-making. The inclusive and collaborative CSR

engagement meta-framework aids organizations in managing diversity, enhancing CSR impact, and fostering inclusivity. This merges frameworks and theories to encourage sustainable business practices. This study seeks practical guidance on leveraging employee diversity for CSR by addressing the lack of a holistic framework for individual CSR responses (Gond et al., 2017). This thesis presents a new meta-framework that accounts for various cognitive skills and enables effective strategies across organizational levels. It provides a holistic perspective on the psychological processes affecting responses to CSR initiatives and allows the development of tailored CSR strategies by recognizing unique traits and motivations. Its flexibility will enable stakeholders to use it either alone or together, fostering a holistic CSR perspective.

Collaboration with employees is, therefore, crucial. Conversations and feedback pinpoint concerns, allowing for tailored CSR initiatives and shared responsibility. Diverse viewpoints foster innovation. Regular talk with staff enhances efficiency and enables tweaking. Teamwork leads to impactful CSR initiatives. The meta-framework enhances CSR strategies by revealing psychological mechanisms. It provides a seven-stage guide for organizations to manage diversity and CSR, starting with maximizing the impact of CSR. Human cognitive diversity is recognized, and emotional conflicts are managed. Engagement is ensured by evaluating strategies, negotiating changes, and monitoring the indicators. The inclusive and collaborative CSR engagement framework is iterative and interconnected to address possible shortcomings. It promotes adaptability, evaluation, integration, quick decision-making, managing diversity and emotions, negotiating changes, and monitoring signals. This fosters an inclusive CSR environment by utilizing employee diversity. This framework offers a comprehensive strategy to enhance CSR tactics. A pictorial representation of this meta-framework is shown in Figure 2.

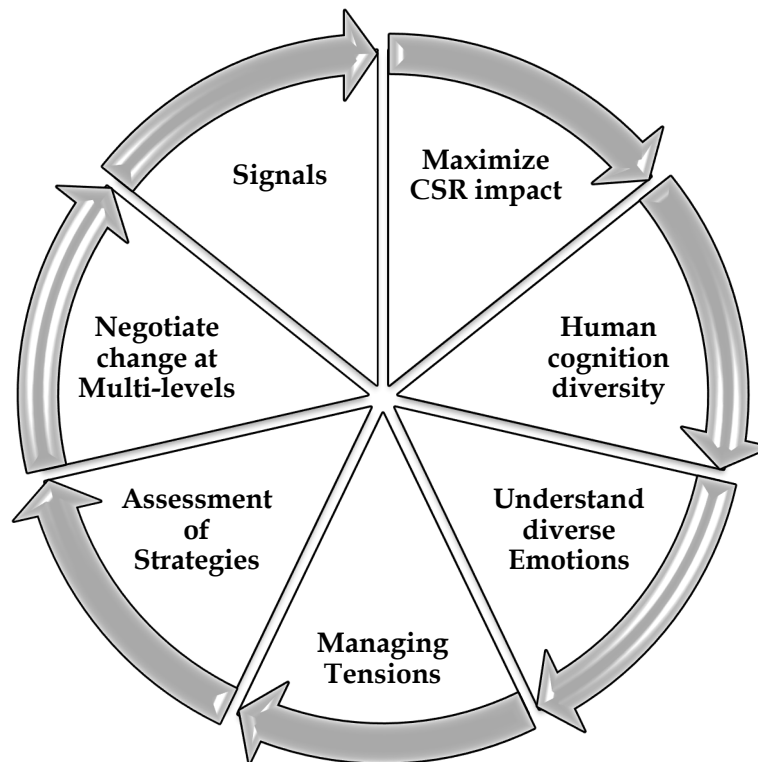


Figure 2 Meta-framework for inclusive and collaborative CSR

The commencement phase focuses on maximizing the CSR impact. It begins with maximizing CSR impact, aligning CSR objectives with organizational core values and strategies, setting measurable targets, and continuously monitoring progress. This proactive approach ensures maximum engagement and effectiveness. By doing so, organizations can maintain a competitive edge while fostering sustainable business practices. Moreover, it nudges firms toward a path of profitability, ethical responsibility, and societal contribution.

Diversity in human cognition is central to this discourse. This framework emphasizes diversity in human cognition. Based on the micro-CSR literature, such as Gond et al. (2017), organizations are encouraged to embrace the diverse cognitive abilities of employees, promote innovation and effectiveness by forming cross-functional teams, and initiate collaborative training programs. Implementing this in daily operations can lead to a harmonious and innovative working environment. This approach can spur creativity, leading to solutions that are both inclusive and out of the box.

Diversity in human emotions helps us understand emotional intelligence, a third dimension. Emotional intelligence forms the next dimension, urging organizations to recognize and manage various emotions from diverse cognitive abilities. Training and supportive environments can significantly enhance employee commitment to CSR initiatives. Such nurturing settings can foster employee well-being and satisfaction. By recognizing the emotional bandwidth of employees, organizations can carve out avenues for healthier discussions and engagement.

Open dialogue is crucial during this stage. Managing tensions forms the next stage, involving open dialogue to address the different perspectives and emotional experiences that employees may be concerned with CSR. This aligns with Freeman's stakeholder theory (1984), which emphasizes the need to engage multiple stakeholder groups in a balanced manner. This promotes a culture of transparency and mutual respect, which makes the workplace a hub for growth and learning. Encouraging open dialogue can also aid in pre-empting potential issues and fostering a proactive problem-solving approach.

The strategy at this juncture advocates benchmarking and feedback assessment. This framework promotes assessing various CSR-related strategies through benchmarking and employee feedback. Continuous refinement and adaptation are encouraged, resonating with Rupp and Mallory's (2015) call for dynamic CSR management practices. This dynamic approach ensures that the strategies remain relevant and effective in a changing business landscape. A commitment to continuous refinement can help stay ahead of industry standards, promoting excellence and forward-thinking.

Inclusivity is a critical pathway. Furthermore, negotiating these changes is critical. This encourages inclusive decision-making processes, allowing employees to have a sense of ownership of CSR initiatives, fostering a shared sense of responsibility, and creating a more inclusive environment. Thus, companies can nurture a culture of collective growth and collaborative success. It forms the bedrock for holistic development, ensuring everyone's voices are heard and valued.

At the heart of the culmination lies a commitment to continuous learning and refinement through feedback. Monitoring feedback, participation, and other behaviors provides valuable insights, allowing organizations to adjust their strategies constantly. This creates a continuous improvement cycle, where feedback is used to fine-tune initiatives and drive progress. Importantly, it reflects a democratic approach, emphasizing that every feedback step contributes to improvement and efficiency. Therefore, the inclusive and collaborative CSR engagement meta-framework fills the gap identified by Gond et al. (2017) and offers a pragmatic tool for organizations. Its broad applicability extends beyond CSR, making it a versatile tool for managing diverse stakeholders. Focusing on microlevel processes provides a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics of CSR and serves as a cornerstone for promoting sustainable and responsible business practices.

The inclusive and collaborative CSR engagement meta-framework addresses complex CSR matters within organizations. This study provides a holistic understanding of CSR implementations by integrating various frameworks, theories, and models. A key feature is the focus on diverse human cognition. Micro-CSR literature emphasizes individual cognitive differences (Gond et al., 2017). Valuing cognitive diversity can foster innovation in CSR initiatives. This meta-framework fills a gap in the literature by acknowledging the significance of individual experiences and proposing a framework to address these issues (Gond et al., 2015, 2017). This meta-framework is compatible with

Freeman's stakeholder theory (1984), which promotes sustainable and responsible business practices through stakeholder engagement. It is versatile and applicable to CSR and to other stakeholder groups. It acknowledges cognitive and emotional diversity, enabling innovative solutions to organizational and societal issues.

Gond et al. (2017) developed a meta-framework that unifies CSR, stakeholder management, cognition, and emotion frameworks. This integration provides a comprehensive and coherent view of CSR implementation. This meta-framework also offers a detailed understanding of the intricate dynamics of CSR initiatives. This understanding can help researchers and practitioners foster sustainable and responsible business practices. This thesis synthesizes the academic contributions of this study, noting that the inclusive and collaborative CSR engagement framework is an integrative construct derived from three seminal articles. This provides a comprehensive roadmap for scholars and practitioners. The framework is dynamic and allows for future modifications and adaptations. As micro-CSR advances, it provides opportunities to incorporate individual-level perspectives. Thus, the meta-framework should be seen as a living construct that can be adapted to include future micro-CSR scholarship. This suggests that iterative updates effectively guide organizations toward sustainable and inclusive CSR practices.

In conclusion, the inclusive and collaborative CSR engagement meta-framework provides a valid and valuable contribution to addressing CSR-related issues. This meta-framework offers a comprehensive understanding of CSR implementation by integrating diverse perspectives and theoretical foundations. Its focus on diversity in human cognition, emotional understanding, and multi-level negotiation enhances its applicability to various complex issues beyond CSR. This meta-framework is a versatile tool for researchers and practitioners seeking to promote sustainable and responsible business practices (Dewey, 1938; James, 1907).

### **5.3 Evaluation and validity of the study**

In this section, the validity and reliability of the thesis are meticulously assessed through a multifaceted approach that harmonizes pragmatic considerations with academic rigor. Initially, the section adopts a pragmatic framework, framing research as a "language game" that weaves together specific questions and methodologies to evaluate the study's applicability and impact in real-world micro-CSR contexts. The section then scrutinizes the context-specific nature of the study's contributions, highlighting intricate variables influencing its outcomes, such as industry, country, and particular circumstances. Finally, this section employs an evaluative lens to examine the study's trustworthiness using a set of criteria focused on dependability, transferability, credibility, and confirmability. By integrating these diverse elements, this section offers a

comprehensive and robust assessment of this thesis's academic integrity and practical relevance.

First, I evaluated the study's validity pragmatically, focusing on real-world applications, especially in micro-CSR. The study frames research as a "language game" to address specific questions, emphasizing the influence of context (Wicks & Freeman, 1998). A set of criteria assesses the study's purpose, methodology, and potential impact. The evaluation concludes by examining the study's trustworthiness, establishing its credibility, and tying the findings to the existing academic discourse.

Inquiry is a foundation for a pragmatic research approach, linking everyday problem-solving with academic rigor. Building on Dewey's (1938) perspective, the essence of inquiry permeates our daily lives as I continuously strive to tackle and resolve issues. When this natural process is intensified and enriched with greater attention to detail, rigor, and self-awareness, it takes the form of academic research (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). This framework emphasizes the critical role of practical, real-world applications in shaping research endeavors, aiming to produce impactful and meaningful solutions to complex challenges (Dmytriyeu et al., 2017).

The pragmatic approach to research design goes beyond linear problem solving, focusing instead on thorough investigation and practical effectiveness. In contrast to the step-by-step orientation often associated with theoretical advancement (Weick, 1989), pragmatism calls for an open-ended inquiry into the subject matter (Mintzberg, 2005). This approach demands a flexible endpoint for investigation and the selection of the most compelling metaphor, model, or rationale (Weick, 1989). In addition, it incorporates conventional methods to test theories' real-world applicability. As Mintzberg (2005) and Antoft and Houlberg Salomonsen (2007) indicated, the goal is to confirm a theory's validity and evaluate its practical success across various contexts.

Context specificity is the foundation of this study's contributions to the literature on micro-CSR. Supported by Felin et al. (2015) and Haack et al. (2019), the importance of considering context in research must be considered. Scholars such as Gond et al. (2017) and Rupp and Mallory (2015) have argued that factors such as industry, country, and unique circumstances play an essential role, especially in micro-CSR. Transparency in research is vital to validating and grounding the study's findings (Rupp & Mallory, 2015). Recognizing that the context heavily influences research outcomes, it is crucial to understand its specific effects. Therefore, my contribution to micro-CSR is inherently context-specific. For example, Article II, which focuses on India, demonstrates the complexities of reconciling national and local interests in a geographically diverse country. While these findings have broad implications for larger nations, they may need to be more relevant for smaller countries.

Research functions as a "language game," serving as just one narrative among many that seek to answer specific research questions. This idea aligns with the pragmatic perspective of knowledge building (Wicks & Freeman, 1998; Freeman et al., 2010). To validate the study results, I employed a set of questions

proposed by Freeman et al. (2010), drawn initially from Gonin (2007). These questions were also used by Tapaninaho (2022, p.85) to validate her doctoral thesis. The questions are as follows:

- “1) Does this work answer the question(s) it proposes?
- 2) Were the questions meaningful and appropriate?
- 3) Are there alternative modes of research that could lend insights into the research question(s)?
- 4) What are the direct consequences of this research?
- 5) If we teach this insight to managers and students, what might be the result if they act on it?
- 6) What is the background narrative(s) of this research?
- 7) How will we begin to see ourselves and others if we act on this work?
- 8) How will this work shape the context in which value creation and trade occur?”

Regarding the primary question, the central purpose of this dissertation is to explore how organizations can comprehend and address diversity in their employees' perspectives to incorporate CSR initiatives effectively. The research question examined how an organization can leverage employee diversity to strengthen its CSR endeavors. This dissertation provides theoretical and empirical evidence of employees' varied responses and behaviors in different CSR-related scenarios. Articles I-III shed light on the elements constituting the microfoundations of CSR and emphasize the existence of distinct cognitive processes among individuals. Furthermore, it underlines the role of emotional sensemaking in molding perceptions, thereby engendering constructive tension that can be harnessed to amplify CSR outcomes and foster a feedback mechanism for potential enhancements. In this regard, the research question posed in this dissertation was addressed.

In response to the second question, the research question is deemed both relevant and apt, given that micro-CSR is continually escalating in significance to organizations, stakeholders, and society at large, a trend observed in both academic research and practical application. As micro-CSR gains traction, it becomes increasingly important to scrutinize the nuances that dictate individual and group behaviors in corporate settings. This trend indicates a broader shift in focus from merely a macro perspective to one that encapsulates the subtle yet substantial microlevel influences, shedding light on the pivotal roles played by individuals and small groups in shaping the CSR landscape.

In response to the third question, several alternative research methodologies exist that can enhance the depth of insights into the posed research question. For instance, a quantitative research methodology, such as a survey questionnaire, could have been employed to comprehend the diversity among employees held by a broader range of staff members involved in the implementation of CSR. Moreover, using focus groups could have allowed for examining the meta-framework for practical viability in organizational contexts.



Arguably, the most intriguing alternative research approach that could have been pursued might have been action or ethnographic research. I could have embedded myself within an organization for an extended period, facilitating using the meta-framework to manage employee diversity. This could have helped add the practitioner's narrative to the thesis.

To answer the fourth question, assessing the immediate implications of this research presents a challenge. Although Articles I-III are readily accessible, determining the thesis' overall impact remains complex. This research aspires to offer meaningful insights to academics and professionals keen to investigate business outlooks that transcend conventional managerial and organizational viewpoints that typically emphasize economic value generation. This thesis aims to motivate employees and managers in the evolution of CSR practices by incorporating various participants and fostering contributions that promote comprehensive CSR.

The fifth question concerning teaching is more straightforward, as the substance of this thesis is integrated into all my teaching at the university. I observed the relevance and resonance of the human aspects of CSR in a green organization as a concept among today's master's degree students. The findings of this thesis will enable students and managers to perceive business through a more intricate and multifaceted lens than is currently understood. Furthermore, the findings will be communicated to the business community on various platforms and in industry-level workshops.

In response to the sixth question, the foundational context of this research is deeply rooted in my past workplace experiences, classroom discussions as a student, and my reading of the micro-CSR literature. I observed that employee diversity can be an issue concerning tensions within this domain, and I cannot move forward because of differences. However, the notion of micro-CSR is steadily gaining prominence in both academics and organizations. Businesses will step up in acknowledging and managing this diversity of overall advantage to achieve the ultimate purpose of CSR initiatives.

Regarding the seventh question, aligning our actions more closely with the narrative explained in this thesis will foster a more sympathetic perception of us and others. This could enhance our recognition of individuals' inherent interconnectedness and interdependency in acting responsibly regarding matters related to CSR. Comprehending these linkages will help advance organizational strategies to encourage cooperation and the recognition of CSR as a collective effort by addressing individualistic approaches and concerns that impact us universally.

In response to the eighth question, this thesis examines the actual environment in which CSR challenges are discussed. While the natural setting presents challenges in addressing diversity among individual employees, it is equally inspiring, as it provides the opportunity to collectively generate solutions for implementing real CSR. Consequently, the primary objective of this thesis is to enhance collective efforts by addressing diversity.

To ensure the merit and reliability of this thesis, I have used a multidimensional approach to trustworthiness, incorporating the criteria of dependability, transferability, credibility, and confirmability, as framed by Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) and Lincoln and Guba (1985). I start with dependability. The research procedures were meticulously outlined in each stand-alone study, and this thesis acts as a summary, providing a detailed account of the overall research process.

Regarding transferability, it is essential to clarify that each study was not an island. Instead, they were contextualized within the larger academic landscape, explicitly linking to existing research on micro-CSR, thereby enhancing the scope and relevance of the findings. This implies that the conclusions drawn have broader applicability, grounded not just in isolated occurrences but in patterns observed across various studies. Interlinking research facilitates a richer, more rounded perspective that can pave the way for informed, substantiated arguments in future scholarly pursuits. Furthermore, it aids in creating a comprehensive knowledge base that can influence policy decisions and organizational strategies, leaning on a robust foundation of interconnected studies that echo a concerted narrative, thus standing as a testament to the collaborative spirit of academic research.

Turning to credibility, this thesis's foundation lies in subject matter expertise and robust data. In particular, I grounded my claims through an exhaustive literature review on the employee-CSR relationship in Study I and utilized two empirical datasets to explore employees' diverse perceptions and emotions concerning CSR. Although interpretations can be subjective, they stem from rigorous data analysis and are further corroborated by the existing academic literature. To mitigate personal biases and foster a comprehensive interpretation, multiple co-authors were involved at various stages in the analytical process.

Finally, for confirmability, I want to emphasize that all conclusions and interpretations in this thesis are intrinsically tied to the data and results from Articles I-III. In other words, the conclusions are not arbitrary but are directly rooted in these studies, serving to answer the overarching research question and objectives outlined in this thesis. This meticulous adherence to the data ensures that the results remain objective, transparent, and devoid of personal bias, fostering scientific rigor that stands up to scrutiny. Moreover, it validates the integrity of the thesis, showcasing a disciplined approach in which each assertion can be traced back to specific findings in the cited articles. This not only reinforces the credibility of the thesis but also provides a clear pathway for peers to verify the findings, promoting a culture of openness and collaborative verification in academic research. This approach lays a solid groundwork for future research, encouraging further exploration and discussion in the micro-CSR domain, anchored in verifiable facts and a clear rationale.

In conclusion, this thesis has thoroughly examined its validity and reliability by employing a multidimensional approach that harmonizes pragmatic and academic considerations. Beginning with a pragmatic framework

that views research as a "language game," this section evaluates the study's real-world applicability and impact, especially in the micro-CSR domain. It then delves into the nuances of context specificity, emphasizing the influence of various factors, such as industry, geography, and unique circumstances, on the study's outcomes. Finally, the study's trustworthiness was scrutinized through dependability, transferability, credibility, and confirmability criteria. This meticulous assessment bolsters the thesis's academic integrity and practical relevance, reinforcing its contributions to the understanding of CSR in complex and varied contexts.

## **5.4 Limitations and future studies**

Every research endeavor has strengths and limitations; this study is no exception. While it provides essential insights into micro-CSR within specific organizational and geographical contexts, it is equally crucial to scrutinize the boundaries and constraints of the study. This transparency lends credibility to the present work and helps define fruitful directions for future research.

### **5.4.1 Limitations**

The following discussion describes these limitations, which range from methodological choices and scope to geographic and industry-specific constraints.

The intentional focus on micro-CSR allows for an in-depth exploration of CSR at the employee level, yet it omits broader organizational and macro-CSR aspects. This narrow scope questions the study's applicability to broader CSR discourses, a decision made to dive deeply into specific facets of CSR. Specificity is purposeful but may not capture the full breadth of CSR practices across organizational hierarchies or economic sectors.

Similarly, the choice of methodologies employed, precisely the qualitative nature of the study, offers depth but may need to pay more attention to quantitative metrics and large-scale trends, thereby offering a limited viewpoint. While qualitative methods excel at capturing nuanced human behavior and experience, they can miss larger patterns that become apparent only through quantitative analysis.

The geographical and industrial confines of this research also bear mention. For example, Article II focuses heavily on the steel industry in India, while Article III narrows its study to an organization in Finland. These specific focuses were deliberate but restricted the generalizability of the findings to other industries and cultural contexts. As such, the study deeply dives into specific regions and sectors but raises questions about its applicability elsewhere. Moreover, both articles are qualitative studies, so generalizability is not the focus area of the thesis.

Furthermore, the literature review, confined to the period between 1990 and January 2019, introduces a limitation. The time-based constraint could overlook recent developments in the field, as academic understanding is continuously evolving. This makes research vulnerable to quickly becoming outdated, especially given the dynamic nature of CSR as a field of study. Consequently, there is a pressing need to update the literature review constantly. Moreover, researchers and scholars venturing into this domain must approach with foresight, accommodate rapid developments, and be prepared to integrate fresh perspectives to present a well-rounded view.

In addition, the prolonged timeframe needed to complete this thesis could result in specific early data becoming less relevant. For instance, interviewees' perspectives could have shifted, changing the landscape of the study's findings. These dynamics raise questions regarding the temporal validity of the results, making them less generalizable over an extended period.

Moreover, this study's focus on individual understanding and interpretation of CSR leaves potential gaps in exploring how organizational culture influences these processes. This aspect could limit understanding of the complex interplay between CSR interpretation's individual and organizational aspects. This limitation also opens the door to future research that could more fully explore the synergistic effects of individual and organizational cultures on CSR perception.

Finally, the selection methodology used to select the experts interviewed, especially in Articles II and III, aligns with qualitative research principles but could introduce biases in the data. Focusing on individual experts with specific experiences in sustainability initiatives may offer a constrained understanding of CSR regulations and emotional sensemaking in broader contexts. This selective focus implies that the study's conclusions may be primarily driven by the perspectives of a narrow set of experts, which adds another layer of limitations.

In summary, these limitations contribute to the potential challenges in the breadth and contemporaneity of the findings. However, they also offer opportunities for future research to build upon this work, enriching our understanding of CSR interpretation and sensemaking across organizational and cultural contexts. Acknowledging these limitations adds depth to the current study and provides a roadmap for addressing these gaps in future research.

#### **5.4.2 Future studies**

As this thesis aims to shed light on the complexities of micro-CSR within organizational settings, it is essential to acknowledge that the journey of understanding this area still needs to be completed. The narrow yet deep focus on employee perspectives serves as a foundational step, opening doors for further investigations in the multifaceted field of CSR. In recognition of this thesis's limitations and specialized scope, this section delineates several promising avenues for future scholarly work. The goal is to remedy the identified limitations and enrich the academic discourse on CSR by offering a roadmap for research that is broader in scope, richer in context, and dynamic in methodology.

As we outline these future research directions, we aim to construct a scaffold upon which subsequent studies can be built, thereby contributing to developing more responsible and sustainable business practices.

As highlighted in this study, integrating the micro-CSR lens provides an invaluable starting point for future research to broaden its scope to include individual-level processes and experiences across various stakeholders. Given the limitations of focusing primarily on employees, future studies should consider extending this framework to customers, suppliers, shareholders, local communities, and NGOs. This broader stakeholder engagement promises a multifaceted, nuanced understanding of CSR's impact from different viewpoints, adding complexity and depth to the existing literature.

Furthermore, developing the stakeholders' thoughts and the intentional inclusion of customer and supplier perspectives can further refine our understanding of CSR's impact. Considering the rise of ethically and socially conscious consumers, there is a rich opportunity to explore how customer interpretations of an organization's CSR initiatives affect purchasing decisions. Likewise, investigating suppliers' perspectives could illuminate an organization's commitment to ethical sourcing and production, adding another layer to the discussion initiated in this study. Expanding the research landscape to engage stakeholders such as shareholders, local communities, and NGOs could result in a well-rounded understanding of CSR's influence. As these stakeholders have unique expectations and perceptions of an organization's CSR activities, their inclusion could offer new dimensions to the discussion of CSR in long-term sustainability, profitability, and societal well-being.

Another aspect that merits exploration is geographical and organizational diversity in CSR interpretation. This study's focus on specific industrial sectors and geographical locations offers a rich but narrow lens. Future research should consider the influence of national culture and geographical diversity on organizational sensemaking. Extending the reach of investigations to include organizations across different countries and cultures would diversify the research landscape and potentially reveal different patterns of CSR sensemaking attributable to various organizational structures, leadership styles, and cultural contexts.

Emerging trends and novel insights have characterized the dynamic field of CSR. As the literature review had a cut-off in January 2019, an updated literature review capturing the most recent developments can offer a more current snapshot of the field. This is particularly useful given the evolving nature of CSR as a subject matter. Keeping alongside the latest studies and findings will enhance the analysis's richness and identify gaps that earlier reviews may have yet to address. Therefore, a revised examination is a vital resource for advancing scholarly dialogue and fostering a deeper understanding of the contemporary landscape of CSR.

The temporal validity of the findings in this study also raises questions that only a longitudinal approach can answer. Future research should track how the interpretations and understanding of CSR initiatives evolve. Such an

approach would offer a dynamic view, allowing for examining significant organizational events, societal norm shifts, and their impact on individual sensemaking processes over extended periods.

Additionally, exploring organizational culture's and subcultures' role in individual sensemaking presents a fascinating research avenue. Given the present study's focus on individual interpretations of CSR, a logical next step would be to explore how different aspects of organizational culture, including subcultures, influence these individual perspectives. This line of inquiry could provide deeper insights into the complex dynamics of CSR interpretations within various organizational environments.

Finally, considering both cognitive and rational sensemaking strategies can add another layer of depth. While this study emphasizes emotional sensemaking, a broader lens incorporating other cognitive processes could provide a more holistic view of how individuals interpret and respond to CSR initiatives.

In summary, these avenues for future research offer a comprehensive roadmap for deepening our understanding of CSR from various perspectives. By engaging with a broader spectrum of stakeholders, considering diverse cultural and organizational contexts, and adopting a longitudinal perspective, future studies can shed light on the multifaceted nature of CSR. This enriched understanding could lead to more effective CSR strategies and practices, thereby contributing to developing more sustainable and responsible businesses.

## REFERENCES

- Abbott, K. W., Levi-Faur, D., & Snidal, D. (2017). Theorizing regulatory intermediaries: The RIT model. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 670(1), 14–35.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716216688272>
- Abell, P., Felin, T., & Foss, N. (2008). Building micro-foundations for the routines, capabilities, and performance links. *Managerial and Decision Economics*, 29(6), 489–502. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mde.1413>
- Adler, P. S., & Heckscher, C. (2018). "Collaboration as an organization design for shared purpose", *Toward permeable boundaries of organizations? (Research in the Sociology of Organizations, Vol. 57)* (pp. 81–111). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X20180000057004>
- Aguilera, R. V., Rupp, D. E., Williams, C. A., & Ganapathi, J. (2007). Putting the S back in corporate social responsibility: A multilevel theory of social change in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(3), 836–863.  
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2007.25275678>
- Aguinis, H. (2011). Organizational responsibility: Doing good and doing well. In S. Zedeck (Ed.), *APA handbook of industrial and organizational psychology, Vol. 3. Maintaining, expanding, and contracting the organization* (pp. 855–879). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/12171-024>
- Aguinis, H., & Glavas, A. (2012). What we know and don't know about corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Management*, 38(4), 932–968.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206311436079>
- Aguinis, H., & Glavas, A. (2019). On corporate social responsibility, sensemaking, and the search for meaningfulness through work. *Journal of Management*, 45(3), 1057–1086. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206317691575>
- Aime, F., Johnson, S., Ridge, J. W., & Hill, A. D. (2010). The routine may be stable but the advantage is not: Competitive implications of key employee mobility. *Strategic Management Journal*, 31(1), 75–87.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.809>
- Al-Atwi, A. A., Amankwah-Amoah, J., & Khan, Z. (2021). Micro-foundations of organizational design and sustainability: The mediating role of learning ambidexterity. *International Business Review*, 30(1), 101656.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2019.101656>
- Ansell, C. (2011). *Pragmatist democracy: Evolutionary learning as public philosophy*. Oxford Academic.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199772438.001.0001>
- Antoft, R., & Houlberg Salomonsen, H. (2007). *Studying organizations by a pragmatic research design: The case of qualitative case study designs*. Paper presented at European Group of Organization Studies "Beyond Waltz - Dances of Individuals and Organizations", Austria.
- Argote, L., & Greve, H. R. (2007). A behavioral theory of the firm – 40 years and counting: Introduction and impact. *Organization Science*, 18(3), 337–349.  
<https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1070.0280>

- Barauskaite, G., & Streimikiene, D. (2021). Corporate social responsibility and financial performance of companies: The puzzle of concepts, definitions and assessment methods. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 28(1), 278–287. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.2048>
- Barnett, M., Henriques, I., & Husted, B. W. (2020). Beyond good intentions: Designing CSR initiatives for greater social impact. *Journal of Management*, 46(6), 937–964. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206319900539>
- Barney, J., & Felin, T. (2013). What are microfoundations? *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 27(2), 138–155. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2012.0107>
- Baron, J. N., & Hannan, M. T. (1994). The impact of economics on contemporary sociology. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 32(3), 1111–1146. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2728604>
- Bartolacci, F., Caputo, A., & Soverchia, M. (2020). Sustainability and financial performance of small and medium sized enterprises: A bibliometric and systematic literature review. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 29(3), 1297–1309. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.2434>
- Battilana, J., Leca, B., & Boxenbaum, E. (2009). How actors change institutions: Towards a theory of institutional entrepreneurship. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 3(1), 65–107. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19416520903053598>
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Anchor Books.
- Bouzzine, Y. D., & Lueg, R. (2022). The reputation costs of executive misconduct accusations: Evidence from the# MeToo movement. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 38(1), 101196. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scaman.2022.101196>
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Sage.
- Boyd, N., & Gessner, B. (2013). Human resource performance metrics: Methods and processes that demonstrate you care. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 20(2), 251–273. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13527601311313508>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Brown, B. J., Hanson, M. E., Liverman, D. M., & Merideth, R. W. (1987). Global sustainability: Toward definition. *Environmental Management*, 11, 713–719. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01867238>
- Carnahan, S., Kryscynski, D., & Olson, D. (2017). When does corporate social responsibility reduce employee turnover? Evidence from attorneys before and after 9/11. *Academy of Management Journal*, 60(5), 1932–1962. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2015.0032>
- Carroll, A. B. (1999). Corporate social responsibility: Evolution of a definitional construct. *Business & Society*, 38(3), 268–295. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000765039903800303>



- Chou, C. J. (2014). Hotels' environmental policies and employee personal environmental beliefs: Interactions and outcomes. *Tourism Management*, 40, 436–446. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2013.08.001>
- Christensen, C. M., & Raynor, M. E. (2003). Why hard-nosed executives should care about management theory. *Harvard Business Review*, 81(9), 66–75.
- Cohen, J. L. (2012). *Globalization and sovereignty: Rethinking legality, legitimacy, and constitutionalism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cohen, M. D., & Bacdayan, P. (1994). Organizational routines are stored as procedural memory: Evidence from a laboratory study. *Organization Science*, 5(4), 554–568. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.5.4.554>
- Coleman, J. (1990). *Foundations of social theory*. Harvard University Press.
- Collins, R. (1981). On the microfoundations of macrosociology. *American Journal of Sociology*, 86(5), 984–1014. <https://doi.org/10.1086/227351>
- Cornelissen, J. P., Durand, R., Fiss, P. C., Lammers, J. C., & Vaara, E. (2015). Putting communication front and center in institutional theory and analysis. *Academy of Management Review*, 40(1), 10–27. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2014.0381>
- Cornelissen, J. P., Durand, R., Fiss, P. C., Lammers, J. C., & Vaara, E. (2015). Putting communication front and center in institutional theory and analysis. *Academy of Management Review*, 40(1), 10–27. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2014.0381>
- Creed, W. D., DeJordy, R., & Lok, J. (2010). Being the change: Resolving institutional contradiction through identity work. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(6), 1336–1364. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.57318357>
- Daft, R. L., & Weick, K. E. (1984). Toward a model of organizations as interpretation systems. *Academy of Management Review*, 9(2), 284–295. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1984.4277657>
- Dahlsrud, A. (2008). How corporate social responsibility is defined: An analysis of 37 definitions. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 15(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.132>
- Davis, G. F., & Marquis, C. (2005). Prospects for organization theory in the early twenty-first century: Institutional fields and mechanisms. *Organization Science*, 16(4), 332–343. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1050.0137>
- Davis, J. P., Eisenhardt, K. M., & Bingham, C. B. (2009). Optimal structure, market dynamism, and the strategy of simple rules. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 54(3), 413–452. <https://doi.org/10.2189/asqu.2009.54.3.413>
- De Roeck, K., & Farooq, O. (2018). Corporate social responsibility and ethical leadership: Investigating their interactive effect on employees' socially responsible behaviors. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 151, 923–939. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-017-3656-6>
- Deephouse, D. L., & Jaskiewicz, P. (2013). Do family firms have better reputations than non-family firms? An integration of socioemotional wealth and social identity theories. *Journal of Management Studies*, 50(3), 337–360. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12015>

- Denzin, N. K. (2010). Moments, mixed methods, and paradigm dialogs. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(6), 419–427. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410364608>
- Dewey, J. (1938). *The theory of inquiry*. Henry Hold and Company.
- DiMaggio, P. (1997). Culture and cognition. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 23(1), 263–287. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.23.1.263>
- Dmytriiev, S., Freeman, R. E., Kujala, J., & Sachs, S. (2017). A pragmatist perspective on management scholarship and on stakeholder engagement in particular. In R. Freeman, J. Kujala & S. Sachs (Eds.), *Stakeholder engagement: Clinical research cases. Issues in business ethics*, Vol 46. Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-62785-4\\_17](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-62785-4_17)
- Elkington, J. (1997). *Cannibals with forks: The triple bottom line of 21st century business*. Capstone.
- Elkington, J. (1998). Partnerships from cannibals with forks: The triple bottom line of 21st century business. *Environmental Quality Management*, 8(1), 37–51. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tqem.3310080106>
- Elkjaer, B., & Simpson, B. (2011), Pragmatism: A lived and living philosophy. What can it offer to contemporary organization theory? In H. Tsoukas & R. Chia (Eds.), *Philosophy and organization theory (Research in the Sociology of Organizations, Vol. 32)* (pp. 55–84). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. [https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X\(2011\)0000032005](https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X(2011)0000032005)
- Eriksson, P., & Kovalainen, A. (2015). *Qualitative methods in business research: A practical guide to social research*. Sage.
- Farjoun, M., Ansell, C., & Boin, A. (2015). PERSPECTIVE – Pragmatism in organization studies: Meeting the challenges of a dynamic and complex world. *Organization Science*, 26(6), 1787–1804. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2015.1016>
- Farooq, M., & Salam, M. (2021). Cleaner production practices at company level enhance the desire of employees to have a significant positive impact on society through work. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 283, 124605. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.124605>
- Felin, T., & Foss, N. J. (2005). Strategic organization: A field in search of micro-foundations. *Strategic Organization*, 3(4), 441–455. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127005055796>
- Felin, T., & Hesterly, W. S. (2007). The knowledge-based view, nested heterogeneity, and new value creation: Philosophical considerations on the locus of knowledge. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(1), 195–218. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2007.23464020>
- Felin, T., Foss, N. J., & Ployhart, R. E. (2015). The microfoundations movement in strategy and organization theory. *Academy of Management Annals*, 9(1), 575–632. <https://doi.org/10.5465/19416520.2015.1007651>
- Felin, T., Foss, N. J., Heimeriks, K. H., & Madsen, T. L. (2012). Microfoundations of routines and capabilities: Individuals, processes, and structure. *Journal of Management Studies*, 49(8), 1351–1374. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2012.01052.x>

- Felin, T., Zenger, T. R., & Tomsik, J. (2009). The knowledge economy: Emerging organizational forms, missing microfoundations, and key considerations for managing human capital. *Human Resource Management, 48*(4), 555–570. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.20299>
- Fink, A. (2003). *The survey handbook*. Sage.
- Foss, N. J. (2003). Bounded rationality and tacit knowledge in the organizational capabilities approach: An assessment and a re-evaluation. *Industrial and Corporate Change, 12*(2), 185–201. <https://doi.org/10.1093/icc/12.2.185>
- Foss, N. J. (2011). Invited editorial: Why micro-foundations for resource-based theory are needed and what they may look like. *Journal of Management, 37*(5), 1413–1428. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206310390218>
- Foss, N. J., Husted, K., & Michailova, S. (2010). Governing knowledge sharing in organizations: levels of analysis, governance mechanisms, and research directions. *Journal of Management Studies, 47*(3), 455–482. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2009.00870.x>
- Francoeur, C., Labelle, R., Balti, S., & EL Bouzaidi, S. (2019). To what extent do gender diverse boards enhance corporate social performance? *Journal of Business Ethics, 155*, 343–357. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-017-3529-z>
- Frederick, W. C. (2016). Commentary: Corporate social responsibility: Deep roots, flourishing growth, promising future. *Frontiers in Psychology, 7*, 129. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00129>
- Freeman, J. (1975). The unit problem in organizational research (Presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco).
- Freeman, R. E., & Dmytriiev, S. (2017). Corporate social responsibility and stakeholder theory: Learning from each other. *Symphonya. Emerging Issues in Management, (1)*, 7–15. <https://doi.org/10.4468/2017.1.02freeman.dmytriiev>
- Freeman, R. E., Harrison, J. S., Wicks, A. C., Parmar, B. L., & De Colle, S. (2010). *Stakeholder theory: The state of the art*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511815768>
- Freeman, R. E., Phillips, R., & Sisodia, R. (2020). Tensions in stakeholder theory. *Business & Society, 59*(2), 213–231. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650318773750>
- Friedman, M. (2007). The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits. In W. C. Zimmerli, M. Holzinger & K. Richter (Eds.), *Corporate ethics and corporate governance*. Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-540-70818-6\\_14](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-540-70818-6_14)
- Fryzel, B., & Seppala, N. (2016). The effect of CSR evaluations on affective attachment to CSR in different identity orientation firms. *Business Ethics: A European Review, 25*(3), 310–326. <https://doi.org/10.1111/beer.12116>
- Gavetti, G. (2005). Cognition and hierarchy: Rethinking the microfoundations of capabilities' development. *Organization Science, 16*(6), 599–617. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1050.0140>

- Gavetti, G., & Levinthal, D. (2000). Looking forward and looking backward: Cognitive and experiential search. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 45(1), 113–137. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2666981>
- Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(1), 15–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428112452151>
- Girschik, V., Svystunova, L., & Lysova, E. I. (2020). Transforming corporate social responsibilities: Toward an intellectual activist research agenda for micro-CSR research. *Human Relations*, 75(1), 001872672097027. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726720970275>
- Girschik, V., Svystunova, L., & Lysova, E. I. (2022). Transforming corporate social responsibilities: Toward an intellectual activist research agenda for micro-CSR research. *Human Relations*, 75(1), 3–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726720970275>
- Glavas, A. (2016). Corporate social responsibility and employee engagement: Enabling employees to employ more of their whole selves at work. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 796. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00796>
- Glavas, A. (2016). Corporate social responsibility and organizational psychology: An integrative review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 144. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00144>
- Gond, J. P., & Moser, C. (2021). Critical essay: The reconciliation of fraternal twins: Integrating the psychological and sociological approaches to ‘micro’ corporate social responsibility. *Human Relations*, 74(1), 5–40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726719864407>
- Gond, J. P., Augustine, G., Shin, H., Tirapani, A. N., & Mosonyi, S. (2022). *How corporate social responsibility and sustainable development functions impact the workplace: A review of the literature* (ILO Working paper 71). International Labour Organization. <https://doi.org/10.54394/RSEZ7942>
- Gond, J. P., El Akremi, A., Swaen, V., & Babu, N. (2017). The psychological microfoundations of corporate social responsibility: A person-centric systematic review. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 38(2), 225–246. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2170>
- Gonin, M. (2007, July). It is better to change the context than the individual: Kohlberg’s teaching for economic morality. In *Proceedings of the International Association for Business and Society* (Vol. 18, pp. 33–38).
- Greenwood, R., Raynard, M., Kodeih, F., Micelotta, E. R., & Lounsbury, M. (2011). Institutional complexity and organizational responses. *Academy of Management Annals*, 5(1), 317–371. <https://doi.org/10.5465/19416520.2011.590299>
- Guzzo, R. F., Abbott, J., & Madera, J. M. (2020). A micro-level view of CSR: A hospitality management systematic literature review. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 61(3), 332–352. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1938965519892907>
- Haack, P., Sieweke, J., & Wessel, L. (2019b), Microfoundations and multi-level research on institutions. In P. Haack, J. Sieweke & L. Wessel (Eds.), *Microfoundations of Institutions (Research in the Sociology of Organizations*,

- Vol. 65A) (pp. 11–40), Emerald Publishing Limited.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X2019000065A005>
- Haack, P., Sieweke, J., & Wessel, L. (2019). Microfoundations and multi-level research on institutions. In P. Haack, J. Sieweke & L. Wessel (Eds.), *Microfoundations of institutions (Research in the Sociology of Organizations, Vol. 65A)* (pp. 11–40). Emerald Publishing Limited.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X2019000065A005>
- Hahn, T., Figge, F., Pinkse, J., & Preuss, L. (2018). A paradox perspective on corporate sustainability: Descriptive, instrumental, and normative aspects. *Journal of Business Ethics, 148*, 235–248.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-017-3587-2>
- Hallett, T., & Hawbaker, A. (2019). Bringing society back in again: The importance of social interaction in an inhabited institutionalism. In P. Haack, J. Sieweke & L. Wessel (Eds.) *Microfoundations of Institutions (Research in the Sociology of Organizations, Vol. 65B)* (pp. 317–336). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X2019000065B024>
- Hannan, M. T., & Freeman, J. (1977). The population ecology of organizations. *American Journal of Sociology, 82*(5), 929–964.  
<https://doi.org/10.1086/226424>
- Harmon, D. J., Haack, P., & Roulet, T. J. (2019). Microfoundations of institutions: A matter of structure versus agency or level of analysis? *Academy of Management Review, 44*(2), 464–467.  
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2018.0080>
- Hazan, O., & Zilber, T. B. (2019). How do institutions take root at the individual level? In P. Haack, J. Sieweke & L. Wessel (Eds.), *Microfoundations of institutions (Research in the Sociology of Organizations, Vol. 65A)* (pp. 153–176). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X2019000065A016>
- Hedström, P., & Swedberg, R. (Eds.). (1998). *Social mechanisms: An analytical approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Henriques, I., & Sadorsky, P. (1999). The relationship between environmental commitment and managerial perceptions of stakeholder importance. *Academy of Management Journal, 42*(1), 87–99.  
<https://doi.org/10.5465/256876>
- Hesse-Biber, S. (2015). Mixed methods research: The “thing-ness” problem. *Qualitative Health Research, 25*(6), 775–788.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315580558>
- Highhouse, S., Thornbury, E. V., & Little, I. M. D. (2007). Social-identity functions of attraction to organizations. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 103*(1), 134–146.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2006.01.001>
- Holm, P. (1995). The dynamics of institutionalization: Transformation processes in Norwegian fisheries. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 40*(3), 398–422.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2393791>

- Huber, R., & Hirsch, B. (2017). Behavioral effects of sustainability-oriented incentive systems. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 26(2), 163–181. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.1905>
- Hwang, H., & Colyvas, J. (2019). What do we talk about when we talk about microfoundations? Conceptualizations of actor and multi-level accounts of the micro in institutional processes. In P. Haack, J. Sieweke & L. Wessel (Eds.) *Microfoundations of Institutions (Research in the Sociology of Organizations, Vol. 65B)* (pp. 337–352). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X2019000065B026>
- James, W. (1907). *Pragmatism*. The American Library.
- Jansen, H. (2010). The logic of qualitative survey research and its position in the field of social research methods. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (Vol. 11, No. 2). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-11.2.1450>
- Jarzabkowski, P., Lê, J. K., & Van de Ven, A. H. (2013). Responding to competing strategic demands: How organizing, belonging, and performing paradoxes coevolve. *Strategic Organization*, 11(3), 245–280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127013481016>
- Jepperson, R., & Meyer, J. W. (2011). Multiple levels of analysis and the limitations of methodological individualisms. *Sociological Theory*, 29(1), 54–73. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9558.2010.01387.x>
- Jones, D. A., Willness, C. R., & Glavas, A. (2017). When corporate social responsibility (CSR) meets organizational psychology: New frontiers in micro-CSR research, and fulfilling a quid pro quo through multilevel insights. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 520. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00520>
- Kaidesoja, T. (2013). Overcoming the biases of microfoundationalism: Social mechanisms and collective agents. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 43(3), 301–322. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0048393113488872>
- Kaushik, V., & Walsh, C. A. (2019). Pragmatism as a research paradigm and its implications for social work research. *Social Sciences*, 8(9), 255. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8090255>
- Keizer, P. (2015). Macro- and micro-approaches in sociology. *Multidisciplinary Economics*, 341–380. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199686490.003.0011>
- Kelly, L. M., & Cordeiro, M. (2020). Three principles of pragmatism for research on organizational processes. *Methodological Innovations*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2059799120937242>
- Koch, C., Bekmeier-Feuerhahn, S., Bögel, P. M., & Adam, U. (2019). Employees' perceived benefits from participating in CSR activities and implications for increasing employees engagement in CSR. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 24(2), 303–317. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ccij-12-2017-0123>
- Korte, R., & Mercurio, Z. A. (2017). Pragmatism and human resource development: Practical foundations for research, theory, and

- practice. *Human Resource Development Review*, 16(1), 60–84.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484317691707>
- Langenus, M., & Dooms, M. (2015). Port industry performance management: A meso-level gap in literature and practice? *International Journal of Logistics Research and Applications*, 18(3), 251–275.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13675567.2015.1026885>
- Laureiro-Martínez, D., Brusoni, S., & Zollo, M. (2010). The neuroscientific foundations of the exploration–exploitation dilemma. *Journal of Neuroscience, Psychology, and Economics*, 3(2), 95–115. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018495>
- Lee, E. M., Park, S. Y., & Lee, H. J. (2013). Employee perception of CSR activities: Its antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(10), 1716–1724. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2012.11.008>
- Lee, E. S., & Szkudlarek, B. (2021). Refugee employment support: The HRM–CSR nexus and stakeholder co-dependency. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 31(4), 936–955. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12352>
- Liboni, L. B., Jabbour, C. J. C., Jabbour, A. B. L. d. S., & Kannan, D. (2017). Sustainability as a dynamic organizational capability: A systematic review and a future agenda toward a sustainable transition. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 142, 308–322. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2016.07.103>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.
- Linnenluecke, M. K., & Griffiths, A. (2010). Corporate sustainability and organizational culture. *Journal of World Business*, 45(4), 357–366.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2009.08.006>
- Little, D. (1991). *Varieties of social explanation: An introduction to the philosophy of social science*. Westview Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2185667>
- Lu, H., Liu, X., Chen, H., Long, R., & Yue, T. (2017). Who contributed to “corporation green” in China? A view of public-and private-sphere pro-environmental behavior among employees. *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, 120, 166–175. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resconrec.2016.12.008>
- Luo, X., & Bhattacharya, C. B. (2006). Corporate social responsibility, customer satisfaction, and market value. *Journal of Marketing*, 70(4), 1–18.  
<https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.70.4.001>
- Maon, F., Vanhamme, J., De Roeck, K., Lindgreen, A., & Swaen, V. (2019). The dark side of stakeholder reactions to corporate social responsibility: Tensions and micro-level undesirable outcomes. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 21(2), 209–230. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12198>
- Margolis, J. D., & Walsh, J. P. (2003). Misery loves companies: Rethinking social initiatives by business. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 48(2), 268–305.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3556659>
- Martínez-Martínez, D., Madueño, J. H., Jorge, M. L., & Sancho, M. P. S. (2017). The strategic nature of corporate social responsibility in smes: A multiple mediator analysis. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 117(1), 2–31.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/imds-07-2015-0315>

- Mashne, L., & Baracscai, Z. (2020). Black box of CSR: Literature review. *Economic and Social Development: Book of Proceedings*, 135–147.
- Matson, P., Clark, W. C., & Andersson, K. (2016). *Pursuing sustainability: A guide to the science and practice*. Princeton University Press.
- McWilliams, A., & Siegel, D. (2001). Corporate social responsibility: A theory of the firm perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 26(1), 117–127. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2001.4011987>
- Mikami, K., Ikegami, J. “JJ”, & Bird, A. (2022). Opportunism and trust in cross-national lateral collaboration: The Renault-Nissan Alliance and a theory of equity-trust. *Journal of World Business*, 57(3), 101286. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2021.101286>
- Mintzberg, H. (2005). Developing theory about the development of theory. *Great minds in management: The process of theory development* (pp. 355–372). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Miska, C., & Mendenhall, M. E. (2018). Responsible leadership: A mapping of extant research and future directions. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 148, 117–134. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2999-0>
- Morgan, D. L. (2014). Pragmatism as a paradigm for social research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(8), 1045–1053. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800413513733>
- Morgeson, F. P., Aguinis, H., Waldman, D. A., & Siegel, D. S. (2013). Extending corporate social responsibility research to the human resource management and organizational behavior domains: A look to the future. *Personnel Psychology*, 66(4), 805–824. <https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12055>
- Naghshineh, B., Ribeiro, A. S., Jacinto, C., & Carvalho, H. (2021). Social impacts of additive manufacturing: A stakeholder-driven framework. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 164, 120368. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2020.120368>
- Nazarov, D., & Klarin, A. (2020). Taxonomy of industry 4.0 research: Mapping scholarship and industry insights. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 37(4), 535–556. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sres.2700>
- Nazarov, D., & Klarin, A. (2020). Taxonomy of industry 4.0 research: Mapping scholarship and industry insights. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 37(4), 535–556. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sres.2700>
- Nejati, M., & Shafaei, A. (2023). Why do employees respond differently to corporate social responsibility? A study of substantive and symbolic corporate social responsibility. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.2474>
- Nelson, R. R., & Winter, S. G. (1982). *An evolutionary theory of economic change*. Cambridge. The Belknap Press of Harvard University. Press [Ca.
- Norton, T. A., Parker, S. L., Zacher, H., & Ashkanasy, N. M. (2015). Employee green behavior: A theoretical framework, multilevel review, and future research agenda. *Organization & Environment*, 28(1), 103–125. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026615575773>



- Onkila, T. (2017). Employee rhetoric in the acceptance or rejection of corporate environmentalism. *Organization & Environment*, 30(2), 142–161.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026616633270>
- Örtenblad, A., Putnam, L. L., & Trehan, K. (2016). Beyond Morgan's eight metaphors: Adding to and developing organization theory. *Human Relations*, 69(4), 875–889. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726715623999>
- Osborne, S., & Hammoud, M. S. (2017). Effective employee engagement in the workplace. *International Journal of Applied Management and Technology*, 16(1), 4. <https://doi.org/10.5590/IJAMT.2017.16.1.04>
- Pache, A. C., & Santos, F. (2013). Inside the hybrid organization: Selective coupling as a response to competing institutional logics. *Academy of Management Journal*, 56(4), 972–1001.  
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2011.0405>
- Palmié, M., Rüegger, S., & Parida, V. (2023). Microfoundations in the strategic management of technology and innovation: Definitions, systematic literature review, integrative framework, and research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 154, 113351.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.113351>
- Paoloni, P. V. R., Massaro, M., Mas, F. D., & Bagnoli, C. (2022). Microfoundations of intellectual capital. Evidence from Italian small accounting firms. *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*, 21(4), 725–737. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14778238.2021.2023676>
- Parris, D. L., Dapko, J. L., Arnold, R. W., & Arnold, D. (2016). Exploring transparency: A new framework for responsible business management. *Management Decision*, 54(1), 222–247.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-07-2015-0279>
- Pentland, B. T., Feldman, M. S., Becker, M. C., & Liu, P. (2012). Dynamics of organizational routines: A generative model. *Journal of Management Studies*, 49(8), 1484–1508. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2012.01064.x>
- Persaud, A., & Schillo, S. R. (2017). Purchasing organic products: role of social context and consumer innovativeness. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 35(1), 130–146. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-01-2016-0011>
- Podgorodnichenko, N., Edgar, F., & Akmal, A. (2022). An integrative literature review of the CSR-HRM nexus: Learning from research-practice gaps. *Human Resource Management Review*, 32(3), 100839.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmmr.2021.100839>
- Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R. (2006). The link between competitive advantage and corporate social responsibility. *Harvard Business Review*, 84(12), 78–92.
- Powell, W., & Colyvas, J. (2008). Microfoundations of institutional theory. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849200387>
- Powell, W., & Rerup, C. (2017). *Opening the black box: The microfoundations of institutions*. SAGE Publications Ltd,  
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526415066>

- Preuss, L., Haunschild, A., & Matten, D. (2009). The rise of CSR: Implications for HRM and employee representation. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 20(4), 953–973.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190902770893>
- Reddy, M. J. (1979). The conduit metaphor: A case of frame conflict in our language about language. In A. Ortony (Ed.), *Metaphor and thought* (pp. 284–324). Cambridge University Press.
- Rosati, F., Costa, R., Calabrese, A., & Pedersen, E. R. G. (2018). Employee attitudes towards corporate social responsibility: A study on gender, age and educational level differences. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 25(6), 1306–1319.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.1640>
- Ruepert, A. M., Keizer, K., & Steg, L. (2017). The relationship between corporate environmental responsibility, employees' biospheric values and pro-environmental behaviour at work. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 54, 65–78. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2017.10.006>
- Rupp, D. E., & Mallory, D. B. (2015). Corporate Social Responsibility: Psychological, Person-Centric, and Progressing. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 2(1), 211–236.  
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032414-111505>
- Rupp, D. E., Ganapathi, J., Aguilera, R. V., & Williams, C. A. (2006). Employee reactions to corporate social responsibility: An organizational justice framework. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, 27(4), 537–543. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.380>
- Rupp, D. E., Shao, R., Thornton, M. A., & Skarlicki, D. P. (2013). Applicants' and employees' reactions to corporate social responsibility: The moderating effects of first-party justice perceptions and moral identity. *Personnel Psychology*, 66(4), 895–933. <https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12030>
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2012). *Research methods for business students* (6th ed.). Pearson Ltd.
- Schillebeeckx, S. J., Chaturvedi, S., George, G., & King, Z. (2016). What do I want? The effects of individual aspiration and relational capability on collaboration preferences. *Strategic Management Journal*, 37(7), 1493–1506.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.2396>
- Scott, W. R. (2008). *Institutions and organizations: Ideas and interests*. Sage.
- Secchi, D. (2009). The cognitive side of social responsibility. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 88, 565–581. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-009-0124-y>
- Shea, C. T., & Hawn, O. V. (2019). Microfoundations of corporate social responsibility and irresponsibility. *Academy of Management Journal*, 62(5), 1609–1642. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2014.0795>
- Shinkle, G. A. (2012). Organizational aspirations, reference points, and goals: Building on the past and aiming for the future. *Journal of Management*, 38(1), 415–455. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206311419856>

- Short, J. (2009). The art of writing a review article. *Journal of Management*, 35(6), 1312–1317. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206309337489>
- Smets, M., Jarzabkowski, P., Burke, G. T., & Spee, P. (2015). Reinsurance trading in Lloyd's of London: Balancing conflicting-yet-complementary logics in practice. *Academy of Management Journal*, 58(3), 932–970. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2012.0638>
- Stinchcombe, A. L. (1991). The conditions of fruitfulness of theorizing about mechanisms in social science. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 21(3), 367–388. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004839319102100305>
- Stoker, G. (2010). The microfoundations of governance: Why psychology rather than economics could be the key to better inter-governmental relations. *Social and Economic Studies*, 59(4), 3–26. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41803726>
- Story, J., & Neves, P. L. (2014). When corporate social responsibility (CSR) increases performance: Exploring the role of intrinsic and extrinsic CSR attribution. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 24(2), 111–124. <https://doi.org/10.1111/beer.12084>
- Suddaby, R. (2010). Challenges for institutional theory. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 19(1), 14–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492609347564>
- Suddaby, R. (2011). How communication institutionalizes: A response to Lammers. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 25(1), 183–190. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318910389265>
- Talisse, R. B., & Aikin, S. F. (2008). *Pragmatism: A guide for the perplexed*. A&C Black.
- Tapaninaho, R. (2022). Stakeholder value creation at the intersection of business and sustainability. <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-03-2479-7>
- Tarba, S. Y., Jansen, J. J. P., Mom, T., Raisch, S., & Lawton, T. C. (2020). A microfoundational perspective of organizational ambidexterity: Critical review and research directions. *Long Range Planning*, 53(6), 102048. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2020.102048>
- Tasselli, S., Kilduff, M., & Landis, B. (2018). Personality change: Implications for organizational behavior. *Academy of Management Annals*, 12(2), 467–493. <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2016.0008>
- Thornton, P. H., & Ocasio, W. (1999). Institutional logics and the historical contingency of power in organizations: Executive succession in the higher education publishing industry, 1958–1990. *American Journal of Sociology*, 105(3), 801–843.
- Tracey, P. (2016). Spreading the word: The microfoundations of institutional persuasion and conversion. *Organization Science*, 27(4), 989–1009. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2016.1061>
- Tran, S. K. (2017). GOOGLE: A reflection of culture, leader, and management. *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility*, 2, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-017-0021-0>
- Van den Steen, E. (2010). On the origin of shared beliefs (and corporate culture). *The RAND Journal of Economics*, 41(4), 617–648. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25746047>

- Van der Byl, C. A., & Slawinski, N. (2015). Embracing tensions in corporate sustainability: A review of research from win-wins and trade-offs to paradoxes and beyond. *Organization & Environment*, 28(1), 54–79.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026615575047>
- Vlachos, P., Panagopoulos, N., Bachrach, D., & Morgeson, F. (2017). The effects of managerial and employee attributions for corporate social responsibility initiatives. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 38(7), 1111–1129. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2189>
- Voegtlin, C., & Greenwood, M. (2016). Corporate social responsibility and human resource management: A systematic review and conceptual analysis. *Human Resource Management Review*, 26(3), 181–197.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2015.12.003>
- Volberda, H. W., Foss, N. J., & Lyles, M. A. (2010). Perspective – Absorbing the concept of absorptive capacity: How to realize its potential in the organization field. *Organization Science*, 21(4), 931–951.  
<https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1090.0503>
- Vuong, T. K., & Bui, H. M. (2023). The role of corporate social responsibility activities in employees' perception of brand reputation and brand equity. *Case Studies in Chemical and Environmental Engineering*, 7, 100313.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cscee.2023.100313>
- Walsh, J. P. (1995). Managerial and organizational cognition: Notes from a trip down memory lane. *Organization Science*, 6(3), 280–321.  
<https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.6.3.280>
- Weber, K., & Glynn, M. A. (2006). Making sense with institutions: Context, thought and action in Karl Weick's theory. *Organization Studies*, 27(11), 1639–1660. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840606068343>
- Weick, K. E. (1989). Theory construction as disciplined imagination. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 516–531.  
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1989.4308376>
- Wicks, A. C., & Freeman, R. E. (1998). Organization studies and the new pragmatism: Positivism, anti-positivism, and the search for ethics. *Organization Science*, 9(2), 123–140.  
<https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.9.2.123>
- Wicks, A. C., & Freeman, R. E. (1998). Organization studies and the new pragmatism: positivism, anti-positivism, and the search for ethics. *Organization Science*, 9(2), 123–140. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2640349>
- Winter, S. (2011). Problems at the foundation? Comments on Felin and Foss. *Journal of Institutional Economics*, 7(2), 257–277.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1744137410000470>
- Wolfswinkel, J. F., Furtmueller, E., & Wilderom, C. P. (2013). Using grounded theory as a method for rigorously reviewing literature. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 22(1), 45–55. <https://doi.org/10.1057/ejis.2011.51>
- Zucker, L. G. (1977). The role of institutionalization in cultural persistence. *American Sociological Review*, 42(5), 726–743.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2094862>



## **ORIGINAL PAPERS**

### **I**

# **A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW ON EMPLOYEE RELATIONS WITH CSR: STATE OF ART AND FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA**

by

Onkila, T. & Sarna, B. 2022

Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management  
vol 29 (2), 435-447

<https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.2210>

Reproduced under attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International  
(CC BY-NC 4.0)

# A systematic literature review on employee relations with CSR: State of art and future research agenda

Tiina Onkila  | Bhavesh Sarna 

School of Business and Economics, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

## Correspondence

Tiina Onkila, School of Business and Economics, University of Jyväskylä, P.O. Box 35, Jyväskylä FI-40014, Finland.  
Email: tiina.onkila@ju.fi

## Funding information

Suomen Akatemia, Grant/Award Number: 320205

## Abstract

Within recent years, the literature on employee–CSR relations has grown significantly. However, the research is fragmented throughout various journals and disciplines, and we still lack a comprehensive literature review on the topic to show what we currently know about the employee relationship with CSR, and what we do not know. In this study, we conduct a systematic literature review on employee relations with CSR, based 331 journal articles. We analyze their methodological and theoretical approaches. Based on their key findings, we build a categorization of dominant research findings and their connections. Building on our review, we show how the research has been dominated by a focus on the organizational implementation of CSR and organizational benefits. Employees have been mainly perceived as implementers of top-down sustainability policies and as mediators towards organizational CSR-related benefits. We also discuss the need for future research on the more active role of employees in CSR relations, especially bottom-up change processes and understanding the role of tensions and complexities.

## KEYWORDS

corporate social responsibility, employees, human resource management, literature review, sustainability, sustainable development

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

In the corporate social responsibility (CSR) literature, employees are often identified as key stakeholders for CSR (Carroll, 1999; Preuss et al., 2009) who are, along with other stakeholders, pushing organizations towards responsible behavior (Aguilera et al., 2007). Since the early works, the role of employees in pushing companies for social and environmental responsibility has been recognized. For example, Henriques and Sadorsky (1999) identified employees among the organizational stakeholders demanding that businesses pursue environmental protection, what has then been supported, for example, by Sharma and Henriques (2005) and Preuss et al. (2009). Employees

take often direct interest in the CSR initiatives and policies of the organization (Rupp et al., 2006). Through their interest, they constantly judge the CSR performance of the organization (Sarina, 2013). More recently, the views of employees as stakeholders in CSR have started to diversify. In addition to their ability to influence CSR policies and practices among other stakeholders, the research has also studied employee engagement in CSR policies, especially its means and benefits (see, e.g., Zhou et al., 2018). Yet, employees have fewer means to adopt or contribute to the CSR policy of an organization (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2010). Thus, the role and relationship of employees to CSR is more multifaceted than first believed. They may take roles in not only pushing the organizations and influencing CSR policies, but also implementing and encouraging CSR, experiencing the outcomes of CSR or lack of it, and in evaluating CSR approaches.

Bhavesh Sarna contributed equally to this study.

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited and is not used for commercial purposes.

© 2021 The Authors. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management* published by ERP Environment and John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

However, the literature still lacks conceptual clarity on employee–CSR relationship. In this study, we analyze all different research streams to create a comprehensive understanding of the interaction between CSR and employees.

Employees as a group have been studied in the CSR literature for many years, and the studies have dealt with multiple perspectives. The literature has studied employee roles in CSR from managerial, organizational, and individual perspectives. Moreover, the research has been conducted over multiple disciplines, such as organization science, sustainability science, and organizational psychology, as well as from multiple theoretical perspectives such as organizational culture theory, organizational identification theory, and stakeholder theory. However, the research remains fragmented, spread throughout various journals and disciplines, and no comprehensive, systematic reviews of the employee relationship with CSR have been presented.

The prior literature reviews on the employee–CSR relationship have contributed important insights to our understanding. Three reviews have reviewed literature on how sustainable human resource management may increase employee engagement (Boyd & Gessner, 2013; Tariq et al., 2016; Voetglin & Greenwood, 2016), and three employee sustainable or green behaviors by employees (Francoeur et al., 2019; Norton et al., 2015; Ones & Dilchert, 2012). These reviews have contributed important insights into how responsibility-related behavior may be encouraged through HRM activities, and identifying its antecedents. However, no comprehensive review on the employee–CSR relationship has been presented, and the phenomenon has not been reviewed as two-sided: based on the influence of both, managerial and employee perspectives. In this review, we take a wider perspective and review the CSR–employee literature from both management and employee perspectives. We conducted a systematic review based on the search words “employee” and “CSR/sustainability” in the Web of Science. Such comprehensive understanding is important due to the strong role employees have in influencing and being influenced by CSR. This understanding is not only conceptually important but also practically: it helps managers and CSR professionals to analyze diversity of employee roles in relation to sustainability strategies. While organizations constantly make choices between various stakeholder demands (Aguilera et al., 2007), many sustainability-related decisions depend upon employees’ understanding of sustainability and CSR issues (Rupp et al., 2006).

Based on our systematic literature review, the main aim of this study is to develop a categorization of the vast available literature and report the research gaps for future studies. Furthermore, we wish to understand what types of methodological and theoretical approaches have been applied in the prior research, as well as to summarize the dominant key findings and understandings pertaining to the employee–CSR relationship.

As a result of our study, we identified three categories that have dominated research on the employee–CSR relationship, as well as subcategories of these larger classifications. We also identified three categories that we term mediating categories, which connect two of the main categories. The findings from most of the analyzed 331 journal articles fall into these categories, and many articles fall into more

than one category. Based on our review, we show how CSR–employee research has been dominated by a focus on the organizational implementation of CSR and organizational benefits. Employees have been mainly perceived as implementers of top-down sustainability policies, and as mediators towards organizational CSR-related benefits. We also discuss the need for future research on the more active role of employees in CSR relations, especially bottom-up change processes and understanding the role of tensions and complexities.

The rest of the review proceeds as follows: first, we first introduce the principles of our systematic review. In the results section, we then introduce the theoretical, methodological, and contextual approaches identified in the articles. We next proceed to the thematic categories identified based on main findings in the reviewed literature. After introducing the dominant categories, we describe the mediating categories and their subcategories. We conclude by discussing the contributions of our review and directions for future research.

## 2 | METHOD

### 2.1 | Literature review and data collection

To gain insight into the current state of research on the CSR–employee relationship, we applied the methodology of systematic literature review (Danese et al., 2018; Fisch & Block, 2018). The aim of a literature review is a systematic process of identification, evaluation, and interpretation of existing literature based on an explicit and reproducible design (Fink, 1998). We applied a literature review method defined by Wolfswinkel et al. (2013). It enables an inductive style of research and the development of significant models/theories arising from the literature data. Based on Wolfswinkel et al. (2013), we describe six stages of our review in the following (see Figure 1):

In stage 1, we defined our benchmarks. The benchmarks used for the identification of articles were: (i) journal articles from different

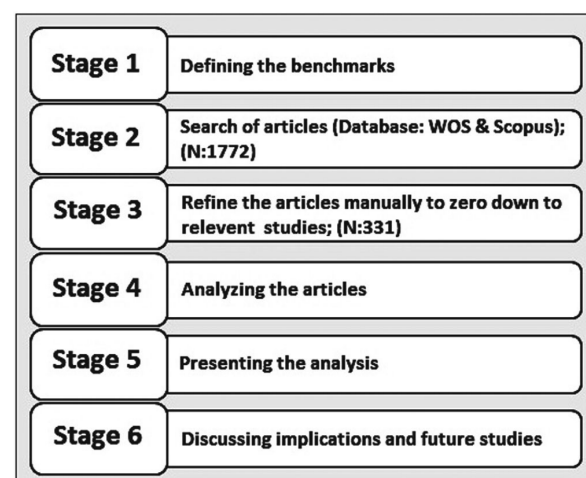


FIGURE 1 Stages of our review

disciplines, (ii) journal articles that are published in English, and (iii) journal articles that were peer-reviewed.

In Stage 2, we conducted our search through Web of Science using the following search words: “corporate social responsibility and employees,” “CSR and employees,” and “sustainability and employees.” The search was conducted in January 2019, bringing the total number of articles to 1638. However, it was noticed that Web of Science was a limited tool for tracking the roots of research on CSR and employees. Therefore, Scopus was used to complement our search for years between 1990 and 2004. Through Scopus, 134 more articles were identified. Thus, the final number of articles was 1772.

In Stage 3, we refined the sample of 1772 articles by setting the boundaries for this literature review. We included those articles that were peer-to-peer reviewed full papers, and not an extended abstract and discussed employees as a well-developed theme or objective of the study. We refined the sample of articles by reading the abstract, titles, and keywords of all the articles. We excluded all those papers where employees were considered as one of multiple stakeholders in the study. After this process, our data set consisted of 331 articles. The number of articles started to increase notably from 2009, and especially rapidly since 2015. The selection of articles and their constituent numbers at the different steps of the study are described in Figure 1, and the amount of articles per year in Figure 2. The first article included in our analysis was published already in 1997, although the initial search also produced results dating from 1991. However, the earliest articles were excluded based on our exclusion criteria, as described above.

At this stage, we noticed that some journals had published notably high numbers of studies. The *Journal of Business Ethics* had published the highest number of studies (69), while the second highest number was in *Sustainability* and in *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, with 15 articles in both. However, most of the studies were scattered around different journals, as the majority of journals had published only one to three articles on the topic. The journals with highest numbers of studies are listed in Table 1.

In Stage 4, we conducted a selective coding of the articles. We analyzed in each article the following: framing of employee–CSR relation; research areas, theories, and methodologies addressed and key findings. We reviewed the key findings of each study and were thus able to identify patterns of similarities between the studies, and to

**TABLE 1** The journals with highest number of studies

Journal	Number of articles
<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Seventy-nine articles
<i>Sustainability</i>	Fifteen articles
<i>Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management</i>	Fifteen articles
<i>International Journal of Human Resource Management</i>	Eleven articles
<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	Eight articles
<i>Social Responsibility Journal</i>	Eight articles
<i>Frontiers in Psychology</i>	Six articles
<i>Business and Society</i>	Six articles

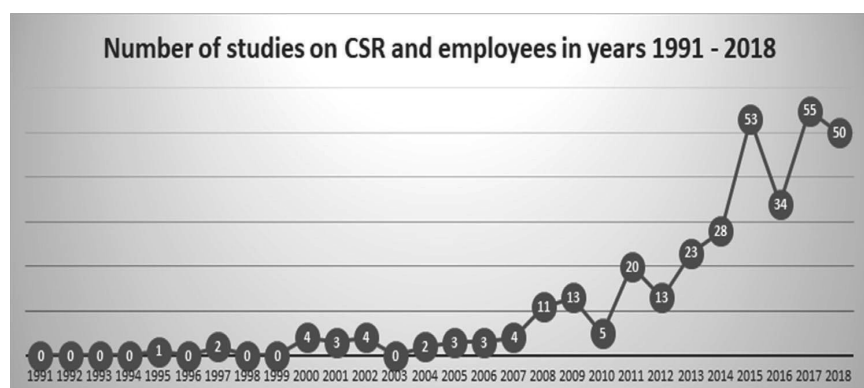
start grouping them into categories. In this phase, we identified certain dominant categories, mediating categories based on connections between two of the dominant categories and subcategories for each main and mediating category.

In Stage 5, we wrote the descriptions of dominant, mediating, and subcategories (described in chapters 4 and 5, Tables 2 and 3). And finally in Stage 6, we focused on discussing the implications of our study and directions for future research. We will next describe the theoretical, methodological, and contextual approaches taken in the reviewed literature. We will then present the key findings of our review in Figure 1, and in the following provide a detailed description of each category.

### 3 | THEORETICAL, METHODOLOGICAL, AND CONTEXTUAL APPROACHES

As a part of our analysis process, we reviewed the theoretical and methodological approaches applied in the studies as well as the contexts in which the empirical studies were conducted. Concerning the *methodological approaches*, we noticed that quantitative research has dominated the study of the CSR–employee relationship. The level of preference for this approach is notable—out of the total of 331 reviewed studies, 229 were conducted quantitatively. Qualitative

**FIGURE 2** Number of studies on CSR–employee relationship between years 1991 and 2018 [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]





**TABLE 2** Number of studies in each main category and subcategory

Dominant categories and their subcategories	Number of studies
1. Organizational implementation of CSR	One hundred three studies in total
1.1. The importance of organization–employee fit, congruence, and organizational harmony	Thirty-two studies
1.2. The importance of organizational level policies, practices, and leader behavior	Seventy-one studies
2. Benefits to organizations	One hundred thirty-four studies in total
2.1. Stronger organization–employee relationship	Fifty-five studies
2.2. Positive outcomes to employees' work and non-work life	Forty studies
2.3. Reputation and external image	Fourteen studies
2.4. Positive outcomes to employee and organizational performance	Twenty-five studies
3. Differences in employee CSR perceptions and their explanatory factors	Forty-eight studies in total
3.1. Differences in employees' CSR perceptions and their explanatory factors	Thirty-two studies
3.2. Tensions and complexities in CSR understandings	Sixteen studies

methods were applied in 46 studies, and mixed methods research in 11 studies. Seven articles were labeled as literature reviews. We further categorized 38 studies as “other studies.” These studies included conceptual and theoretical studies, modeling and mathematical modeling-based studies, as well as studies in which the method was somewhat unclear.

In the quantitative studies, specific causal relationships were explored, and the connections between employee CSR perceptions and outcomes were established (Graves & Sarkis, 2018; Hur et al., 2018). In contrast, the qualitative studies focused more on creating an understanding of the different types of employees, relationships, conflicts, HRM practices, and emotions related to CSR (Järström et al. 2018; Rodrigo & Arenas, 2008). The mixed methods studies combined various different types of understandings.

Concerning the *theoretical approaches*, we noticed that a clear majority of the studies did not apply a specific, well-defined theory. Instead, the theoretical chapters of the studies we constructed based on literature reviews on the key concepts of the study. In those studies, which were clearly connected to certain theoretical discussions, we noticed a fragmentation around multiple theories. For example, stakeholder theory, institutional theory, and social exchange theory were all applied. Despite this fragmentation, we noticed that social identity theory has dominated research on the employee–CSR relationship. It was applied in 45 of the 331 studies we reviewed.

**TABLE 3** Number of studies in each mediating category and their subcategories

Mediating categories and their subcategories	Number of studies
1. Interaction between organizational implementation of CSR and employee CSR perceptions	Twenty-four studies in total
1.1. How do organizational practices shape employee CSR perceptions and engagement	Fourteen studies
1.2. The effects of (un)successful CSR to employee perceptions, experience, and employee organization-fit	Ten studies
2. Interaction between benefits to organizations and employee CSR perceptions	Twenty-two studies in total
2.1. Employee CSR perceptions' influence on organizational benefits	Eleven studies
2.2. Further impacts of employee CSR perceptions' influence on organizational benefits	Eleven studies
3. Interaction between organizational implementation of CSR and benefits to organizations	Twenty-four studies in total

Concerning the contextual approaches, we also reviewed the dominant *national or industry contexts*. The research was scattered around different industries and multiple countries. A focus on multiple industries was the most dominant industry context (46%). This meant that the data collection had targeted organizations operating in different fields of industry. Out of those studies that focused solely on one industry, the highest number (15%) was in the manufacturing industry, followed by the financial sector (12%), the oil, gas, and energy sector (11%), and the hospitality and tourism sector (5%). The rest of the studies (11%) focused on other sectors, such as exports, newspapers and the media, education, the food industry, the packaging industry, construction, and retail. Concerning the contexts, most of the studies were carried out in European countries (65 studies), followed by the United States (32 studies). China (16 studies), South Korea (14 studies), the United Kingdom (12 studies), India (9 studies), Canada (5 studies), and Australia (4) also had multiple studies. However, most of the studies (167 studies) were scattered around different countries.

#### 4 | DOMINANT RESEARCH CATEGORIES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE REVIEWED LITERATURE

In the following section, we will introduce the categories of the dominant research streams providing our understanding of the employee–CSR relationship. We identified three dominant categories of research: (1) the organizational implementation of the research, (2) the benefits of employee CSR engagement, and (3) employee perceptions of CSR and their differences. Each of these categories is divided into subcategories that emerged from the research.

In addition, we identified a significant body of research combining two of the main categories, and named these as mediating categories. The mediating categories are: interaction between organizational implementation of CSR and employee CSR perceptions, interaction between benefits to organizations and employee CSR perceptions, and interaction between the organizational implementation of CSR and benefits to organizations. The main categories and mediating categories are illustrated in Figure 3.

In the following table (Table 2), the number of studies contributing to each category is listed. It is notable that a part of the reviewed studies did not have one clear key finding, but instead two key findings. They thus contributed to more than one category. This explains the fact that the total amount of studies shown in these tables do not match with the amount of studies (331) reviewed in the literature review. In addition, the data set included some studies that did not fall under any of these main categories, and were thus excluded from the analysis. Those studies were single cases with different focuses such as building safe working environment (Hemphill & White III, 2018). As shown in the table, the research showing how employees should be engaged with CSR implementation (94 studies in total) and studies focusing on the benefits of employee engagement with CSR (131 studies in total) have dominated the field of research. Studies dealing with differences in employee perceptions of CSR were also identified, but were not numerous (48 studies in total). The number of findings positioned in mediating categories was notably lower, varying between 21 and 24 studies in total. These are presented in Table 2.

#### 4.1 | Organizational implementation of CSR

The first group of studies focuses on an organizational level perspective to the implementation of CSR. These studies stress the importance of the organizational level shared meanings of CSR, and the importance of organizational practices and leader behavior. Employees' role in CSR is perceived as being implementers of organizational level CSR policies. This group of studies perceives CSR within

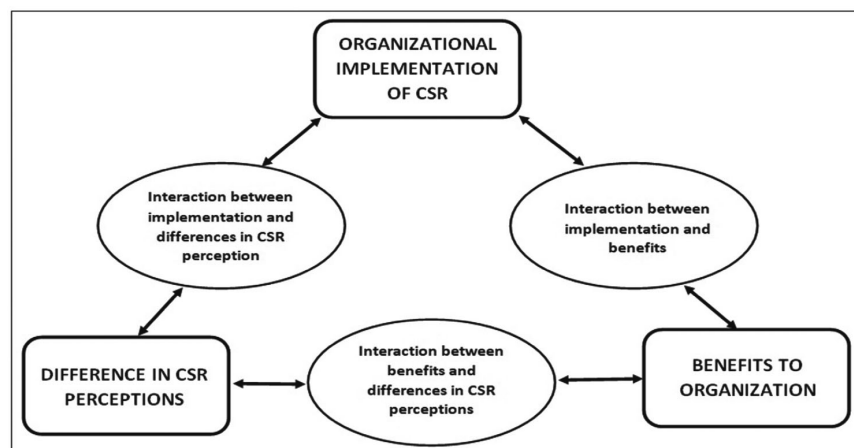
organizations as a top-down managed phenomenon, and focuses on the creation of organizational level commitment to CSR. Instead of focusing on individual level differences, employees are treated as groups of people who should share visions towards CSR. Thus, the studies focus on analyzing questions such as: how are shared meanings and values of CSR created within organizations? How and when do employees implement CSR policies? How is CSR engagement encouraged within organizations?

Two subcategories were identified in this group of studies: the importance of organization employee fit, congruence, and harmony, and the importance of organizational level policies, practices, and leader behavior.

##### 4.1.1 | The importance of organization–employee fit, congruence, and organizational harmony

The findings of these studies highlight the need for organization–employee fit, and congruence in values, harmony, and consistency as a precondition for CSR becoming an organization-wide and accepted phenomenon. Not only does this harmony need to exist between organizational support and employees, but also among different individual employees (Saifulina & Carballo-Penela, 2017), and to this must be added the fit between employees' and leaders' motivations (Shao et al., 2017). A shared approach towards CSR also moderates the effect that personal environmental values have on environmental behavior (Chou, 2014). For example, Brunton et al. (2017) show that CSR initiatives in organizations are essentially influenced by the perceived value congruence between managers and employees. De Roeck and Farooq (2018) add the need for consistency between employees' perceptions of CSR and ethical leadership. Organization-wide CSR approaches are also seen as a prerequisite for changing the behavior of those employees with less interest in CSR issues. For example, Ruepert et al. (2017) show that organization-wide shared CSR approaches may also encourage those employees with relatively weak environmental values to engage in CSR-based behavior.

**FIGURE 3** Main categories, mediating categories, and their relationships



#### 4.1.2 | The importance of organizational level policies, practices, and leader behavior

The second subcategory developed in a similar way, by focusing on how employees start implementing organizational CSR policies and how those policies become accepted throughout the organization. The results of these studies have especially stressed the importance of communication and green HRM for engaging employees. Additionally, the studies have stressed the relationship between CSR attitudes, the behavior of leaders, and that of employees.

Already Ramus (2002) indicated that clear sustainability policies and supervisory support increase employee willingness to take sustainability initiatives. Concerning communication, Potoski and Callery (2018) studied employees' engagement with CSR and showed that new modes of internal communication can strengthen companies performance and improve employee engagement with CSR policies. On the other hand, Halter and de Arruda (2009) stressed that the negative outcomes related to lack of communication and transparency may lead to irresponsible decisions among employees. According to their conclusions, internal communication within the organization is crucial for complying with CSR policies.

Concerning HRM, the studies have shown the need for changes to provide support for spreading organizational CSR. The concept of a green and sustainable HRM has been introduced. For example, Dumont et al. (2017) show how green HRM affects both employee in-role and extra-role workplace green behavior, but only as mediated through different social and psychological processes.

Furthermore, the studies show how organization-wide acceptance of CSR policies depends on leader support. Supervisors providing examples through responsible leadership is an important mediator for employee CSR behavior (Gao & He, 2017), and leader responsible behavior seems to lead to increasing responsible behavior among employees (Kim, Kim, et al., 2017; Wang, 2018).

Based on the main category of "organizational implementation of CSR" and its two subcategories, the following understanding can be summarized concerning the employee-CSR relationship:

- Employee implementation of CSR policies requires a fit with values and cultures.
- Employee engagement in CSR requires active communication and green HRM.
- Employee engagement with CSR requires leader support.

#### 4.2 | Benefits to organizations

This main category focuses on the benefits that employee engagement with CSR provides, especially from the perspective of the organization. These studies focus on concepts such as image, reputation, and performance. They especially focus on analyzing how employee CSR engagement may be beneficial for the organization, and also examine, although from a bit more limited view, how CSR engagement may be beneficial to employee work and non-work lives. Thus, these studies focus on analyzing questions such as: How do organizations benefit from involving employees in CSR?

How can organizations leverage employees' initiative/voluntarism in CSR? How does employee engagement with CSR provides mutual benefits?

Within this main category, four subcategories were identified: stronger organization-employee relationship, positive outcomes on employees' work and non-work life, reputation and external image, and positive outcomes for employee and organizational performance. Out of these subcategories, only the second (positive outcomes on employees work and non-work life) has an employee level focus. The other subcategories focus on organizational level benefits.

##### 4.2.1 | Stronger organization-employee relationship

The findings in this subcategory focus on showing how CSR strengthens the organization-employee relationship and supports affective organizational commitment as well as organizational identification. These studies have mainly taken quantitative approaches. For example, De Roeck and Maon (2018) showed how CSR can strengthen the employee-organization relationship and also support microlevel outcomes. To stress the emotional aspects of CSR, multiple studies have shown that internal CSR and employee experiences of it also support the affective commitment to the organization (Kim, Rhou, et al., 2017; Mory et al., 2016; Shen & Jihua Zhu, 2011) and related organizational citizenship behavior (Kim, Rhou, et al., 2017).

In addition to affective commitment, the research has explored the relationship between employee commitment and the CSR of the employing organization. Asrar-ul-haq et al. (2017) show that CSR highly influences organizational commitment in general. CSR not only enhances the commitment of employees but also their organizational citizenship behavior (Choi & Yu, 2014; Lee & Seo, 2017). The CSR-related employee commitment, and related organizational citizenship behavior, further mediates the organizational performance (Ali et al., 2010; Choi & Yu, 2014).

The research further suggests that CSR, and related increase in organizational (affective) commitment and organizational identification, also influence employee turnover intentions. The decrease in turnover intentions is especially mediated by CSR perceptions, belief in the importance of CSR and CSR awareness (Chaudhary, 2017a), and the trust employees have in their organization (Hansen et al., 2011).

##### 4.2.2 | Positive outcomes to employees' work and non-work life

The findings in this subcategory have highlighted the benefits of employee CSR engagement, focusing on the level of the individual employee. The research has shown benefits for both employees' work and non-work life. The research has linked CSR engagement and the perceptions of employees with higher job satisfaction (Asrar-ul-Haq et al., 2017; Barakat et al., 2016), which is also shaped by the organizational image (Barakat et al., 2016).

Furthermore, these studies have shown that employees' CSR perceptions support their experienced quality of working life (Kim, Rhou,

et al., 2017), as well as employee attitude and behavior at work (Chaudhary, 2017b). The research has also noticed that CSR engagement at work can influence employees' non-work and family lives. For example, Lee et al. (2018) indicate that CSR experienced in work life positively influences employees' overall satisfaction in life.

#### 4.2.3 | Reputation and external image

The findings in this subcategory show that employee CSR engagement provides benefits for organizations' efforts at improving their external image. This type of research has been conducted in different contexts. For example, Raub (2017) connected to corporate philanthropy and showed how it may encourage employees to act to support the external image. Dögl and Holtbrügge (2014) supported this by showing how different types of employee engagements can support the environmental reputation of the employing organization, including its reputation as an employer.

#### 4.2.4 | Positive outcomes to employee and organizational performance

The findings in this subcategory have linked employee CSR engagement with organizational performance, and shown how it supports performance at the organizational level, such as in financial outcomes. On the other hand, the research has also shown how the CSR practices of the organization support employee performance at the individual level, such as in creativity or job satisfaction. Thus, the research has shown an interactive relationship between CSR practices, employee engagement, organizational performance, and employee performance.

First, the research has shown how employee engagement assumes a mediating role in the relationship between CSR practices and organizational performance. While Wolf (2013) states that employee engagement moderates the relationship between firm performance and CSR implementation to some extent, Bučiūnienė and Kazlauskaitė (2012) suggested that there is a clear link between HRM, CSR, and performance outcomes. In this case, the positive relationship required well-developed CSR policies. Faleye and Trahan (2011) showed that those practices significantly outweigh, and thus support the firm's financial outcomes as well. Muthuri et al. (2009) support the perspective of the benefits of employee volunteerism, as it creates opportunities for building new partnerships.

Second, the research has shown how CSR practices support employee performance on an individual level. For example, Sun and Yu (2015) took showed a positive relationship between CSR and employee performance. Glavas and Piderit (2009) and Gharleghi et al. (2018) showed that CSR seems to especially increase creativity among employees. More specifically, Glavas and Piderit (2009) highlight that employees who perceive higher levels of CSR are more eager to engage, and also to involve creatively.

Based on the main category of "benefits to organizations," and its four subcategories, the following understandings can be summarized concerning the employee-CSR relationship:

- CSR strengthens employee organization fit, identification with the firm, and (affective) commitment, what may lead to less turnover intentions.
- Employee CSR perceptions support job satisfaction, and the quality work and non-work life.
- Employee CSR engagement improves an organization's external image and attractiveness as an employer.
- Employee CSR engagement improves organizational performance, and CSR practices improve employee performance.

#### 4.3 | Differences in employee CSR perceptions and their explanatory factors

This group of studies focuses on a more individual level perspective to the implementation of CSR, by identifying differences in employees' perceptions of CSR and exploring their explanatory factors. However, a clear microlevel perspective is still missing, as the studies target employees as groups regarding their perceptions of CSR, for example by creating employee typologies based on their CSR approaches. The research has also identified multifaceted meanings, practices, and conceptualizations of CSR among employees, and shown how these may cause tensions and complexities for the implementation of CSR. However, this notion has not been explored further. Thus, the studies focus on analyzing questions such as: how do employees perceive CSR? How do employee perceptions differ? What explains the differences in employees' CSR perceptions?

Two dominant subcategories were identified within this main category: differences in employee CSR perceptions and their explanatory factors, and tensions and complexities in the understanding of CSR.

##### 4.3.1 | Differences in employees' CSR perceptions and their explanatory factors

The studies within this subcategory have shown that employees' CSR perceptions differ, and have explored the explanatory factors for those differences. The findings of these studies have identified both demographic factors, for example relating to employees' education and life situations, as well as differences drawn from organizational level factors. Concerning demographic factors, for example, Lu et al. (2017) and Rosati et al. (2018) suggest that age, gender, level of education, site of living, level of incomes, and marital status influence employee CSR behavior. Vitell and Hidalgo (2006) added that CSR perceptions also depend on the country of residence. Farooq et al. (2014) support the perspective that organizational level differences can better explain differences in CSR perceptions—they show how employee experiences of CSR activities explain their perceptions of CSR. Kim, Kim, et al. (2017) add that employee perceptions are also shaped by colleagues' green behavior. Inevitably, employee perceptions are also influenced by their personal environmental beliefs, values, and attitudes. For example, Chou (2014) and Huber and Hirsch (2017) suggest that they are an important moderating factor for employee environmental behavior.

The researchers have also created typologies based on the differences in CSR perceptions and approaches among employees. For example, Du et al. (2015) identified categories of idealists, enthusiasts, and indifferents depending on their demand for organizational CSR. Rodrigo and Arenas (2008) further categorized employees based on their attitudes towards CSR program implementation. Onkila (2015) categorized employee perspectives on employing an organization's CSR based on their emotional arguments and responses.

#### 4.3.2 | Tensions and complexities in the understanding of CSR

Within this subcategory, the research showed that employees' different understandings of CSR, even within an organization, may include tensions and complexities. Puncheva-Michelotti et al. (2018) relate these tensions to stakeholder role and the varying identities of individuals, while Edwards and Kudret (2017) stress that there are also complexities in employee responses to CSR practices. Onkila (2017) specified that employees' understandings of whether the organizations should, or should not, take responsibility for its environmental impacts is particularly tension-filled, and depends on micro-contextual aspects. Seiwright and Unsworth (2016) identified two contrasting cohorts of employees, divided according to their CSR engagement and how CSR contributes to the meaningfulness of their work. This research perspective also moves towards a more microlevel understanding of the employee-CSR relationship. For example, Rupp et al. (2013) show how the effects of individuals' CSR perceptions are more complicated than previously noticed, and further understanding would require a microlevel approach.

Based on the main category of “differences in employee CSR perceptions and their explanatory factors,” and its two subcategories, the following understanding can be summarized concerning the employee-CSR relationship:

- Employee perceptions on CSR differ depending on demographic and organizational factors.
- Employees assign multiple meanings to CSR that often incorporate complexities and tensions.

## 5 | MEDIATING RESEARCH CATEGORIES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE REVIEWED LITERATURE

### 5.1 | Interaction between organizational implementation of CSR and employee CSR perceptions

Concerning mediating categories—meaning studies that connect the main streams of research, as we explained in Section 4—we found several studies in which the connections between the organizational implementation of CSR and employee CSR perceptions are established and explored. We identified two dominant categories of

those studies: how organizational practices shape employee CSR perceptions, and engagement and the effects of (un)successful CSR on employee perceptions, experience, and employee-organization fit.

#### 5.1.1 | How do organizational practices shape employee CSR perceptions and engagement

The studies within this subcategory focus on explaining the meaning and importance of organizational-level CSR practices, such as different kinds of CSR initiatives, influencing how employees perceived CSR, and their tendency to engage in CSR activities within the organization. For example, Opoku-Dakwa et al. (2018) studied how CSR initiatives may promote employee engagement with CSR, depending on how well the initiatives fit with the employees' personal CSR expectations and Spanjol et al. (2015) added that employees perceive CSR more positively when there is a fit between an employee's personal concern for the environment and organizational concern for the environment.

#### 5.1.2 | The effects of (un)successful CSR on employee perceptions, experience, and employee-organization fit

This subcategory consists of studies in which the effects of successful (or unsuccessful) CSR are related to the development in employee perceptions, experiences, and employee-organization fit. For example, El Akremi et al. (2018) showed how higher level CSR positively influences organizational pride, job satisfaction, organizational identification, affective commitment, and perceived organizational support. Allen et al. (2017) added that the perceived CSR performance of the employing organizations, as well as organizational identification, influence affective organizational commitment, and Afsar et al. (2018) showed how perceived CSR influences, through organizational identification, also employee behavior.

Based on the mediating category of “interaction between organizational implementation of CSR and employee CSR perceptions” and its two subcategories, the following understanding can be summarized concerning the employee-CSR relationship:

- Depending on contextual factors, successful organizational CSR initiatives increase employee engagement and produce positive CSR perceptions among employees.
- Perceived levels of (un)successful CSR can support positive/negative perceptions of CSR among employees, as well as employee-organization fit.

### 5.2 | Interaction between benefits to organizations and employee CSR perceptions

The second mediating category connects the benefits of employee CSR engagement with differing employee CSR perceptions. We

identified two dominant categories within those studies: the influence of employee CSR perceptions on organizational level benefits, and the impacts of that relationship on benefits and perceptions.

### 5.2.1 | The influence of employee CSR perceptions on organizational benefits

The studies in this subcategory have shown how the positive CSR perceptions of employees provide support to the organizational level benefits of employee CSR engagement. For example, Rupp et al. (2018) showed that employees who perceive higher CSR-specific autonomy also had stronger work engagement. This was supported by Ditlev-Simonsen (2015), who noticed that CSR perceptions predict affective commitment to the firm, but this is influenced by perceived organizational support. Im et al. (2017) continued by indicating that the CSR participation of employees positively influences their job satisfaction, organizational identification, and organizational commitment. McNamara et al. (2017) further showed how both externally and internally focused CSR supports employees' affective commitment.

### 5.2.2 | Further impacts of the influence of employee CSR perceptions on organizational benefits

While a significant body of research has shown how employee CSR perceptions connect with organizational benefits, another stream of research has deepened this discussion to further analyze the impacts of this relationship. For example, Shin et al. (2016) extend the relationship between perceived CSR and organizational identification to positive impacts on employees' job performance. De Roeck and Delobbe (2012) supported this view by showing that perceived CSR positively relates to organizational identification, and then also moderates the relationship to organizational trust. Raub and Blunschi (2014) took a wider view, and suggested that CSR perceptions relate to job satisfaction, personal initiative, and perceived task significance. On the other hand, the relationship also decreases emotional exhaustion, and thus the danger of negative responses.

Based on the mediating category of "interaction between benefits to organizations and employee CSR perceptions" and its two sub-categories, the following understanding can be summarized concerning the employee-CSR relationship:

- Positive CSR perceptions among employees support organizational commitment.
- Positive CSR perceptions, and the related organizational commitment, further explain positive employee performance at work and trust in the employing organization.

### 5.3 | Interaction between the organizational implementation of CSR and benefits to organizations

Within this mediating category, the studies focused on the relationship between the organizational level implementation of CSR and

benefits to organizations. These studies were especially related to the question of how the fit between employees' CSR approaches and organizational CSR approaches positively influence, for example, organizational commitment and environmental performance. No clear sub-categories were identified within this mediating category.

The research positioned under this category focused particularly on discussing how CSR-related employee-organization fit also provides organizational level benefits. For example, Kang et al. (2018) found that the fit between employee approaches and organizational CSR positively influences commitment. Haski-Leventhal et al. (2017) also showed that a congruence connecting employees and employers can be a foundation for a successful CSR model that results in positive organizational outcomes. The congruence of CSR and environmental-related programs also positively associates with job satisfaction, but this requires a cooperation with other management practices (Delmas & Pekovic, 2018), and possibly the implementation of multiple policies within the organization (Valentine and Fleischman, 2008). John et al. (2017) showed that CSR supports employees' organizational identification, increases their pride in the employer, and finally leads to a willingness to make an impact through work.

Based on the mediating category of "interaction between the organizational implementation of CSR and benefits to organizations," the following understanding can be generalized concerning the employee-CSR relationship:

- CSR-related employee-organization fit also provides organizational level benefits.

## 6 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 6.1 | The state of the art in employee-CSR research

The aim of this literature review was to systematically review the CSR research that focuses on employees and to identify how the CSR-employee relationship has been studied and what the dominant key findings are. In the review, we identified three main categories of research that have dominated the field of CSR-employee research: (1) the organizational implementation of the research, (2) the benefits of employee-CSR engagement, and (3) employee perceptions of CSR and their differences. Thus, the review shows that CSR-employee research has been dominated by focuses on the organizational implementation of CSR and organizational benefits. In those studies, employees are mainly perceived as implementers of top-down sustainability policies and as mediators towards organizational CSR-related benefits, and the focus has been placed on the question of how employees can contribute to CSR within their employing organizations. In addition, the review showed that differences in employee perceptions have been recognized, and that their explanatory factors, as well as tensions in employees' CSR understandings, have been identified, but not explored further.

Our review illustrates the complex and interactive relationships prior research has identified concerning CSR-employee relations. We

identified a significant number of studies positioned within mediating categories that combined two of the main categories. This means that, for example, the possible organizational benefits of employee engagement with CSR depend on how CSR has been organizationally implemented, and that organizational implementation of CSR shapes employee–CSR perceptions. This shows how difficult CSR–employee relationships are to analyze, and then also to manage.

Our review provides a conceptual understanding of the relationship between employees and CSR. This is important due to the strong role employees play in influencing and implementing CSR policies. It clarifies conceptual linkages between different perspectives, and shows how they may influence each other. Such conceptual understanding offers managers and CSR professionals tools for in-depth analysis on how employees can be better engaged in CSR, how it may be beneficial for the organization and how the diversity of employees could be in CSR management practices. Based on the understanding created in our study, arguments for inclusion of employees in CSR management and planning can be constructed.

The prior research has been able to show how multiple factors eventually influence CSR–employee relationships. However, the research still seems theoretically fragmented, and largely produced by qualitative methodologies. As pointed out before, from a theoretical perspective the reviewed studies were rather limited. While the majority of the studies applied no clear theory, in those studies applying specific theories, social identity theory was clearly dominant. We believe that such lack of clear theories relates to diverse role of employees in relation to CSR. We do not believe that this phenomenon should be studied through only limited amount of theories in the future either. Instead, we believe that a more in-depth understanding can be gained by more extensively applying theories of individual and organizational behavior, agency, psychology, social networking, and structure. From the perspective of methodology, there was more rigor; the studies applied both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, as well as mixed method and conceptual research. However, the research was dominated by quantitative approaches. Moreover, no experimental approaches were identified. Such focus on quantitative research has allowed repetitive and comparative findings by focusing on extensive research approaches and data sets. However, more focus on qualitative and experimental research would help us to find more in-depth approaches, as well as understanding nuances and individual and contextual approaches, to this multifaceted relationship between employees and CSR. Thus, there is room for broadening both the theoretical and methodological approaches in employee–CSR research, in order to gain a deeper understanding of this complex relationship.

Our review thus contributes to the CSR–employee literature by providing a comprehensive overview of the current state of the art of that research, identifying the dominant themes in research as well as the complex, interactive relationships between those dominant categories. However, the review naturally carries some limitations. First, the search was limited to a specific databases, and different databases could have yielded different results. Second, the search was focused only on the specific search words “employees” and “corporate social responsibility/sustainability/CSR,” and applying such search words as

“greening organizations” and “organizations & sustainable changes,” for example, might also have yielded different search results. Furthermore, we decided to focus only on journal articles, while several interesting book chapters have also been published on the topic.

## 6.2 | Future research directions

Based on the contributions of the study, there are multiple gaps that should be covered by future research on the CSR–employee relationship. Based on the current literature review, four concerns emerge about the previous studies, and these provide suggestions for future streams of research. These relate to bottom-up change processes started by employees, employees as targets of responsibility, deepening perspectives on the tensions and complexities in employees' understanding of CSR, and expanding the theoretical rigor, methods, and contexts of future studies. Many of these suggestions for future research deal with adding microlevel CSR research (Jones et al., 2017), and thus approaching employee–CSR research more as an individual-level phenomenon.

First, the prior findings show a lack of understanding about how employees can initiate and drive sustainability changes within organizations. The reviewed research was dominated by top-down management approaches, and employees are mainly seen as implementers of organization-level policies. This deals with activity and agency, and especially with the bottom-up actions of employees. Future research should especially focus on questions such as: how and in which situations are bottom-up actions by employees enabled? What are the challenges in the bottom-up CSR actions of employees? What influences the employees' ability to act on such initiatives? What stories and narratives are related to successful bottom-up CSR action within organizations? These research questions would be especially fruitful for in-depth case studies, based on which an understanding of the phases and influences of such complex bottom-up processes could be created; the studies could also apply theories such as issue life-cycle theory (see, e.g., Zyglidopoulos, 2003) and human agency theory (Bandura, 1989).

Second, somewhat surprisingly the reviewed literature focused on treating employees as implementers of responsibility, and showing differences in their perceptions, but only dealt with the role of employees as targets of responsibility in a very limited way. Although employees are one of the key stakeholder groups, to whom the company is seen as being responsible (see, e.g., Pelozo & Shang, 2011), the views of employees as targets of responsibility was not given the appropriate amount of interest. Studies on the social dimensions of CSR should largely focus on employee well-being and justice. However, they were only marginally addressed in the reviewed research. We suggest that future research should apply theories of business ethics, and both qualitative and quantitative research approaches, to map employee experiences of their employing firms' CSR, especially relating to questions such as equality in the work-place, well-being, and social justice. This would involve research questions such as: how are employee experiences as targets of responsibility influenced by

CSR initiatives? What are employees' expectations for CSR initiatives, from the point of view of their workplace well-being and equality?

Third, the reviewed research has identified that there exists tensions and complexities in employee understandings of CSR. While they were identified as naturally existing, they were not explored further. We need more understanding of individual-level differences related to CSR initiatives, and how such differences (e.g., different backgrounds, different individual value priorities) influence employee willingness to participate in CSR, or to initiate changes. This would require both in-depth case studies, experimental studies, and quantitative studies, and would involve research questions such as: how and when do such tensions and complexities in CSR understanding develop? How do they influence organizational CSR processes? What are the outcomes of such tensional understandings, and do they provide obstacles for change? How does one deal with such complexities and tensions? How can one promote CSR despite the existence of such complexities and tensions? Although we are currently gaining more and more understanding of CSR as a tensional and paradoxical phenomenon (Hahn et al., 2018), this understanding does not yet appear in the CSR-employee literature. In certain situations, such differences in understandings may also trigger new changes, as they may raise new perspectives that have not been previously thought of within the organization. Thus, we would encourage a move in the literature from "shared meanings" to "discovering a multiplicity of meanings" for CSR.

Finally, as noted previously in this article, we call for more theoretical, methodological, and contextual rigor in future research. Research has been dominated by certain methods and one specific theory. Otherwise, approaches have been rather fragmented. We also call more appreciation for the contexts of multiple meanings. Future research should also focus more on contextual influence, and analyze how stakeholder willingness to participate in CSR initiatives is influenced by different contextual factors, such as external pressures, different legal requirements, and differences in managerial support.

## ORCID

Tiina Onkila  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5658-2052>

Bhavesh Sarna  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5550-2564>

## REFERENCES

- Afsar, B., Cheema, S., & Javed, F. (2018). Activating employee's pro-environmental behaviors: The role of CSR, organizational identification, and environmentally specific servant leadership. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 25(5), 904–911.
- Aguilera, R. V., Rupp, D. E., Williams, C. A., & Ganapathi, J. (2007). Putting the S back in corporate social responsibility: A multilevel theory of social change in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(3), 836–863.
- Ali, I., Rehman, K., & Ali, S. (2010). Corporate social responsibility influences, employee commitment and organizational performance. *African Journal of Business Management*, 4(12), 2796–2801.
- Allen, G. W., Attah, P. A., & Gong, T. (2017). Transformational leadership and affective organizational commitment: Mediating roles of perceived social responsibility and organizational identification. *Social Responsibility Journal*, 13(3), 585–600.
- Asrar-ul-Haq, M., Kuchinke, K. P., & Iqbal, A. (2017). The relationship between corporate social responsibility, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment: Case of Pakistani higher education. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 142, 2352–2363.
- Bandura, A. (1989). Human agency in social cognitive theory. *American Psychologist*, 44(9), 1175.
- Barakat, S. R., Isabella, G., Boaventura, J. M. G., & Mazzon, J. A. (2016). The influence of corporate social responsibility on employee satisfaction. *Management Decision*, 54(9), 2325–2339.
- Boyd, N., & Gessner, B. (2013). Human resource performance metrics: Methods and processes that demonstrate you care. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 20(2), 251–273.
- Brunton, M., Eweje, G., & Taskin, N. (2017). Communicating corporate social responsibility to internal stakeholders: Walking the walk or just talking the talk? *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 26(1), 31–48.
- Buciuniene, I., & Kazlauskaitė, R. (2012). The linkage between HRM, CSR and performance outcomes. *Baltic Journal of Management*, 7(1), 5–24.
- Carroll, A. (1999). Corporate social responsibility: Evolution of a definitional construct. *Business and Society*, 38(3), 268–295.
- Chaudhary, R. (2017a). CSR and turnover intentions: Examining the underlying psychological mechanisms. *Social Responsibility Journal*, 13(3), 643–660.
- Chaudhary, R. (2017b). Corporate social responsibility and employee engagement: Can CSR help in redressing the engagement gap? *Social Responsibility Journal*, 13(2), 323–338.
- Choi, Y., & Yu, Y. (2014). The influence of perceived corporate sustainability practices on employees and organizational performance. *Sustainability*, 6(1), 348–364.
- Chou, C. J. (2014). Hotels' environmental policies and employee personal environmental beliefs: Interactions and outcomes. *Tourism Management*, 40, 436–446.
- Danese, P., Manfè, V., & Romano, P. (2018). A systematic literature review on recent lean research: State-of-the-art and future directions. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 20(2), 579–605.
- Delmas, M. A., & Pekovic, S. (2018). Organizational configurations for sustainability and employee productivity: A qualitative comparative analysis approach. *Business & Society*, 57(1), 216–251.
- De Roeck, K., & Maon, F. (2018). Building the theoretical puzzle of employees' reactions to corporate social responsibility: An integrative conceptual framework and research agenda. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 149(3), 609–625.
- De Roeck, K., & Delobbe, N. (2012). Do environmental CSR initiatives serve organizations' legitimacy in the oil industry? Exploring employees' reactions through organizational identification theory. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 110(4), 397–412.
- De Roeck, K., & Farooq, O. (2018). Corporate social responsibility and ethical leadership: Investigating their interactive effect on employees' socially responsible behaviors. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 151(4), 923–939.
- Ditlev-Simonsen, C. D. (2015). The relationship between Norwegian and Swedish employees' perception of corporate social responsibility and affective commitment. *Business & Society*, 54(2), 229–253.
- Dögl, C., & Holtbrügge, D. (2014). Corporate environmental responsibility, employer reputation and employee commitment: An empirical study in developed and emerging economies. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25(12), 1739–1762.
- Du, S., Bhattacharya, C. B., & Sen, S. (2015). Corporate social responsibility, multi-faceted job-products, and employee outcomes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 131(2), 319–335.
- Dumont, J., Shen, J., & Deng, X. (2017). Effects of green HRM practices on employee workplace green behavior: The role of psychological green climate and employee green values. *Human Resource Management*, 56(4), 613–627.
- Edwards, M. R., & Kudret, S. (2017). Multi-foci CSR perceptions, procedural justice and in-role employee performance: The mediating role of commitment and pride. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 27(1), 169–188.



- El Akremi, A., Gond, J. P., Swaen, V., De Roeck, K., & Igalens, J. (2018). How do employees perceive corporate responsibility? Development and validation of a multidimensional corporate stakeholder responsibility scale. *Journal of Management*, 44(2), 619–657.
- Faleye, O., & Trahan, E. A. (2011). Labor-friendly corporate practices: Is what is good for employees good for shareholders? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 101(1), 1–27.
- Farooq, M., Farooq, O., & Jasimuddin, S. M. (2014). Employees response to corporate social responsibility: Exploring the role of employees' collectivist orientation. *European Management Journal*, 32(6), 916–927.
- Francoeur, V., Paillé, P., Yuriev, A., & Boiral, O. (2019). The measurement of green workplace behaviors: A systematic review. *Organization & Environment*, 34(1), 18–42.
- Fink, A. (1998). *Conducting research literature review: From paper to internet*. Sage Publications.
- Fisch, C., & Block, J. (2018). Six tips for your (systematic) literature review in business and management research. *Management Review Quarterly*, 68(2), 103–106.
- Gao, Y., & He, W. (2017). Corporate social responsibility and employee organizational citizenship behavior. *Management Decision*, 55(2), 294–309.
- Gharleghi, B., Afshar Jahanshahi, A., & Nawaser, K. (2018). The outcomes of corporate social responsibility to employees: Empirical evidence from a developing country. *Sustainability*, 10(3), 698.
- Glavas, A., & Piderit, S. K. (2009). How does doing good matter. *Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, 36(3), 51–70.
- Graves, L. M., & Sarkis, J. (2018). The role of employees' leadership perceptions, values, and motivation in employees' proenvironmental behaviors. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 196, 576–587.
- Hahn, T., Figge, F., Pinkse, J., & Preuss, L. (2018). A paradox perspective on corporate sustainability: Descriptive, instrumental, and normative aspects. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 148(2), 235–248.
- Halter, M. V., & de Arruda, M. C. C. (2009). Inverting the pyramid of values? Trends in less-developed countries. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 90(3), 267–275.
- Hansen, S. D., Dunford, B. B., Boss, A. D., Boss, R. W., & Angermeier, I. (2011). Corporate social responsibility and the benefits of employee trust: A cross-disciplinary perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 102(1), 29–45.
- Haski-Leventhal, D., Roza, L., & Meijls, L. C. (2017). Congruence in corporate social responsibility: Connecting the identity and behavior of employers and employees. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 143(1), 35–51.
- Hemphill, T. A., & White, G. O., III. (2018). Multinational enterprises, employee safety and the socially responsible supply chain: The case of Bangladesh and the apparel industry. *Business and Society Review*, 123(3), 489–528.
- Henriques, I., & Sadorsky, P. (1999). The relationship between environmental commitment and managerial perceptions of stakeholder importance. *Academy of Management Review*, 42, 87–99.
- Huber, R., & Hirsch, B. (2017). Behavioral effects of sustainability-oriented incentive systems. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 26(2), 163–181.
- Hur, W. M., Moon, T. W., & Ko, S. H. (2018). How employees' perceptions of CSR increase employee creativity: Mediating mechanisms of compassion at work and intrinsic motivation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 153(3), 629–644.
- Im, S., Chung, Y. W., & Yang, J. Y. (2017). Employees' participation in corporate social responsibility and organizational outcomes: The moderating role of person-CSR fit. *Sustainability*, 9(1), 28.
- Järström, M., Saru, E., & Vanhala, S. (2018). Sustainable human resource management with salience of stakeholders: A top management perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 152(3), 703–724.
- John, A., Qadeer, F., Shahzadi, G., & Jia, F. (2017). Corporate social responsibility and employee's desire: A social influence perspective. *The Service Industries Journal*, 37(13–14), 819–832.
- Jones, D. A., Willness, C. R., & Glavas, A. (2017). When corporate social responsibility (CSR) meets organizational psychology: New frontiers in micro-CSR research, and fulfilling a quid pro quo through multilevel insights. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 520.
- Kang, S., Han, S. J., & Bang, J. (2018). The fit between employees' perception and the organization's behavior in terms of corporate social responsibility. *Sustainability*, 10(5), 1650.
- Kim, A., Kim, Y., Han, K., Jackson, S. E., & Ployhart, R. E. (2017). Multilevel influences on voluntary workplace green behavior: Individual differences, leader behavior, and coworker advocacy. *Journal of Management*, 43(5), 1335–1358.
- Kim, H. L., Rhou, Y., Uysal, M., & Kwon, N. (2017). An examination of the links between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its internal consequences. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 61, 26–34.
- Lee, S. H., Ha-Brookshire, J., & Chow, P. S. (2018). The moral responsibility of corporate sustainability as perceived by fashion retail employees: A USA-China cross-cultural comparison study. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 27(8), 1462–1475.
- Lee, S. Y., & Seo, Y. W. (2017). Corporate social responsibility motive attribution by service employees in the parcel logistics industry as a moderator between CSR perception and organizational effectiveness. *Sustainability*, 9(3), 355.
- Linnenluecke, M. K., & Griffiths, A. (2010). Corporate sustainability and organizational culture. *Journal of World Business*, 45(4), 357–366.
- Lu, H., Liu, X., Chen, H., Long, R., & Yue, T. (2017). Who contributed to “corporation green” in China? A view of public-and private-sphere pro-environmental behavior among employees. *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, 120, 166–175.
- McNamara, T. K., Carapinha, R., Pitt-Catsoupes, M., Valcour, M., & Lobel, S. (2017). Corporate social responsibility and employee outcomes: The role of country context. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 26(4), 413–427.
- Mory, L., Wirtz, B. W., & Göttel, V. (2016). Factors of internal corporate social responsibility and the effect on organizational commitment. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 27(13), 1393–1425.
- Muthuri, J. N., Matten, D., & Moon, J. (2009). Employee volunteering and social capital: Contributions to corporate social responsibility. *British Journal of Management*, 20(1), 75–89.
- Norton, T. A., Parker, S. L., Zacher, H., & Ashkanasy, N. M. (2015). Employee green behavior: A theoretical framework, multilevel review, and future research agenda. *Organization & Environment*, 28(1), 103–125.
- Ones, D. S., & Dilchert, S. (2012). Employee green behaviors. In S. E. Jackson, D. S. Ones, & S. Dilchert (Eds.), *The SIOP professional practice series. Managing human resources for environmental sustainability* (pp. 85–116). Jossey-Bass.
- Onkila, T. (2015). Pride or embarrassment? Employees' emotions and corporate social responsibility. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 22(4), 222–236.
- Onkila, T. (2017). Employee rhetoric in the acceptance or rejection of corporate environmentalism. *Organization & Environment*, 30(2), 142–161.
- Opoku-Dakwa, A., Chen, C. C., & Rupp, D. E. (2018). CSR initiative characteristics and employee engagement: An impact-based perspective. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 39(5), 580–593.
- Pelozo, J., & Shang, J. (2011). How can corporate social responsibility activities create value for stakeholders? A systematic review. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 39(1), 117–135.
- Potoski, M., & Callery, P. J. (2018). Peer communication improves environmental employee engagement programs: Evidence from a quasi-experimental field study. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 172, 1486–1500.
- Preuss, L., Haunschild, A., & Matten, D. (2009). The rise of CSR: Implications for HRM and employee representation. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 20(4), 953–973.

- Puncheva-Michelotti, P., Vocino, A., Michelotti, M., & Gahan, P. (2018). Employees or consumers? The role of competing identities in individuals' evaluations of corporate reputation. *Personnel Review*, 47(6), 1261–1284.
- Ramus, C. A. (2002). Encouraging innovative environmental actions: What companies and managers must do. *Journal of World Business*, 37(2), 151–164.
- Raub, S. (2017). When employees walk the company talk: The importance of employee involvement in corporate philanthropy. *Human Resource Management*, 56(5), 837–850.
- Raub, S., & Blunschi, S. (2014). The power of meaningful work: How awareness of CSR initiatives fosters task significance and positive work outcomes in service employees. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 55(1), 10–18.
- Rodrigo, P., & Arenas, D. (2008). Do employees care about CSR programs? A typology of employees according to their attitudes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 83(2), 265–283.
- Rosati, F., Costa, R., Calabrese, A., & Pedersen, E. R. G. (2018). Employee attitudes towards corporate social responsibility: A study on gender, age and educational level differences. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 25(6), 1306–1319.
- Ruepert, A. M., Keizer, K., & Steg, L. (2017). The relationship between corporate environmental responsibility, employees' biospheric values and pro-environmental behaviour at work. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 54, 65–78.
- Rupp, D. E., Shao, R., Skarlicki, D. P., Paddock, E. L., Kim, T. Y., & Nadisic, T. (2018). Corporate social responsibility and employee engagement: The moderating role of CSR-specific relative autonomy and individualism. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 39(5), 559–579.
- Rupp, D. E., Shao, R., Thornton, M. A., & Skarlicki, D. P. (2013). Applicants' and employees' reactions to corporate social responsibility: The moderating effects of first-party justice perceptions and moral identity. *Personnel Psychology*, 66(4), 895–933.
- Rupp, D. E., Ganapathi, J., Aguilera, R. V., & Williams, C. A. (2006). Employee reactions to corporate social responsibility: An organizational justice framework. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 27(4), 537–543.
- Saifulina, N., & Carballo-Penela, A. (2017). Promoting sustainable development at an organizational level: An analysis of the drivers of workplace environmentally friendly behaviour of employees. *Sustainable Development*, 25(4), 299–310.
- Sarina, T. (2013). The challenges of a representation gap: Australian experiments in promoting industrial citizenship. *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society*, 52, 397–418.
- Seivwright, A. N., & Unsworth, K. L. (2016). Making sense of corporate social responsibility and work. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 443.
- Sharma, S., & Henriques, I. (2005). Stakeholder influences on sustainability practices in the Canadian forest products industry. *Strategic Management Journal*, 26, 59–180.
- Shen, J., & Jihua Zhu, C. (2011). Effects of socially responsible human resource management on employee organizational commitment. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 22(15), 3020–3035.
- Shin, I., Hur, W. M., & Kang, S. (2016). Employees' perceptions of corporate social responsibility and job performance: A sequential mediation model. *Sustainability*, 8(5), 493.
- Shao, B., Cardona, P., Ng, I., & Trau, R. N. (2017). Are prosocially motivated employees more committed to their organization? The roles of supervisors' prosocial motivation and perceived corporate social responsibility. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 34(4), 951–974.
- Spanjol, J., Tam, L., & Tam, V. (2015). Employer–employee congruence in environmental values: An exploration of effects on job satisfaction and creativity. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 130(1), 117–130.
- Sun, L., & Yu, T. R. (2015). The impact of corporate social responsibility on employee performance and cost. *Review of Accounting and Finance*, 14(3), 262–284.
- Tariq, S., Jan, F. A., & Ahmad, M. S. (2016). Green employee empowerment: A systematic literature review on state-of-art in green human resource management. *Quality & Quantity*, 50(1), 237–269.
- Valentine, S., & Fleischman, G. (2008). Ethics programs, perceived corporate social responsibility and job satisfaction. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 77(2), 159–172.
- Vitell, S. J., & Hidalgo, E. R. (2006). The impact of corporate ethical values and enforcement of ethical codes on the perceived importance of ethics in business: A comparison of US and Spanish managers. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 64(1), 31–43.
- Voetglin, C., & Greenwood, M. (2016). Corporate social responsibility and human resource management: A systematic review and conceptual analysis. *Human Resource Management Review*, 26(3), 181–197.
- Wang, Y. (2018). Commitment to sustainable development: Exploring the factors affecting employee attitudes towards corporate social responsibility-oriented management. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 25(6), 1284–1292.
- Wolf, J. (2013). Improving the sustainable development of firms: The role of employees. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 22(2), 92–108.
- Wolfswinkel, J. F., Furtmueller, E., & Wilderom, C. P. (2013). Using grounded theory as a method for rigorously reviewing literature. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 22(1), 45–55.
- Zhou, Z., Luo, B. N., & Tang, T. L. P. (2018). Corporate social responsibility excites 'exponential' positive employee engagement: The Matthew effect in CSR and sustainable policy. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 25(4), 339–354.
- Zyglidopoulos, S. C. (2003). The issue life-cycle: Implications for reputation for social performance and organizational legitimacy. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 6(1), 70–81.

**How to cite this article:** Onkila, T., & Sarna, B. (2022). A systematic literature review on employee relations with CSR: State of art and future research agenda. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 29(2), 435–447. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.2210>



## II

# **FROM COMPLIANCE TO POTENTIAL FOR DYNAMIC INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION: EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVES ON CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY REGULATION IN INDIA**

by

Sarna, B., & Onkila, T. (n.d)

Under Review.

Request a copy from the author.



### III

## **RATIONALITY, EXPERIENCES OR IDENTITY WORK? SENSEMAKING OF EMOTIONALLY TENSE EXPERIENCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY**

by

Sarna, B., Onkila, T., & Mäkelä, M. 2022

Social Responsibility Journal, vol 18 (8), 1692-1707

<https://doi.org/10.1108/SRJ-05-2021-0205>

Reproduced with kind permission by the publisher under the license agreement between Bhavesh Sarna and Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

License Id: 1399574-1

ISSN: 1747-1117

## Rationality, experiences, or identity work? Sensemaking of emotionally tense experiences of organizational sustainability

### Abstract

**Purpose** – *Although emotional tensions related to organizational sustainability have been identified, little is known about how employees aim to resolve such situations. This study aimed to explore how employees use sensemaking to resolve emotionally tense situations concerning organizational sustainability.*

**Design/methodology/approach** – *We studied a case in which, while employees attached positive emotions to organizational sustainability, external stakeholders viewed it negatively. Specifically, we analysed how employees used sensemaking to resolve such tense experiences, and how this sensemaking eventually influenced their actions. To this end, we interviewed 25 employees at an energy company who had experience participating in its sustainability work.*

**Findings** – *The analysis revealed three sensemaking mechanisms for resolving emotional tensions related to organizational sustainability caused by discrepancies between external reputation and internal personal experience: rational sensemaking, experiential sensemaking, and identity work. The complexity of sensemaking was reflected in the mixed use of these three mechanisms, as employees constantly moved from one to another.*

**Originality** – *This study demonstrates employees' tendency to defend their positive emotions about their organization's sustainability in tense situations. It further provides insights into related sensemaking processes and shows how they can result in different levels of action.*

**Keywords** *Employees, Emotions, Organizational sustainability, Sensemaking, Tensions*

### Introduction

As sustainability awareness has increased, both cognitive and emotional reactions to sustainability challenges have become increasingly apparent. Particularly climate stress has recently been associated with multiple emotions, such as fear and anger. Thus, sustainability is increasingly framed as an emotional phenomenon. In the organizational context, sustainability is inherently an emotionally laden phenomenon and is often portrayed in emotional terms (Andersson and Bateman, 2000). Research has shown that employees attach both positive and negative emotions to organizational sustainability, depending on the sustainability issue involved (Fineman, 1996; Russell and Ashkanasy, 2007; Wright and Nyberg, 2012; Onkila, 2015). Employees associate self-conscious emotions, such as pride and shame, with sustainability initiatives and their outcomes in the organization (Morales-Raya *et al.*, 2019).

Although sustainability has been identified as an emotionally laden phenomenon, research on employees' emotions regarding sustainability has only recently emerged (e.g., Onkila, 2015; Blomfield *et al.*, 2016). Studies have shown that sustainability in the workplace is emotionally important to employees and that employee participation triggers emotional responses (Rupp *et al.*, 2006; Voronov and Vince, 2012). Emotions may be triggered by certain responses to sustainability events (Harvey *et al.*, 2017) and may contribute to organizational actions towards sustainability (Highhouse *et al.*, 2009). Research has revealed the multiplicity of emotions

1  
2  
3 related to organizational sustainability and their consequences (e.g., Russell and Ashkanasy,  
4 2007; Ditlev-Simonsen, 2015) and the ways in which these emotions influence sustainability  
5 actions within organizations (e.g., Carrus *et al.*, 2008). However, while tensions and the  
6 attachment of opposite emotions to sustainability have been identified (Wright and Nyberg,  
7 2012; Mitra and Buzzanell, 2017), little is known about the ways in which employees aim to  
8 resolve emotionally tense situations and the consequences of such solutions for their  
9 engagement in sustainability action.  
10  
11

12  
13 To fill this knowledge gap, we conducted a micro-level study of an energy company whose  
14 employees describe emotional tensions related to organizational sustainability between  
15 themselves and external stakeholders. Whereas the former attach positive emotions, such as  
16 pride, to their employer's sustainability performance, the latter perceive it negatively, and the  
17 company generally has a poor sustainability reputation, of which the firm's employees are  
18 aware. Specifically, we analysed how employees use sensemaking to resolve such tense  
19 experiences and how this sensemaking eventually influences their actions. We aimed to answer  
20 the following research question: *How do employees use sensemaking to resolve emotionally*  
21 *tense situations concerning organizational sustainability?* We interviewed 25 employees who  
22 had experience participating in the employer's sustainability work.  
23  
24  
25

26  
27 This study contributes to the literature by identifying various sensemaking mechanisms for  
28 resolving emotional tensions caused by discrepancies between external reputation and personal  
29 experience. Our results provide insights into the complexity of such sensemaking, as indicated  
30 by the mixed use of its various types. The study also contributes to the literature on emotions  
31 related to organizational sustainability by showing how such sensemaking influences  
32 employees' sustainability actions.  
33  
34

35  
36 The rest of this paper is structured as follows. We first review the literature on the meanings of  
37 emotions related to sustainability within organizations. We then introduce our sensemaking  
38 approach and particularly its emotional features. Subsequently, we describe our data collection  
39 and analysis. Next, we report our findings. Finally, we conclude by discussing our findings and  
40 comparing them with the literature.  
41  
42

### 43 **Emotions related to organizational sustainability**

44  
45 Sustainability in organizations is a multidimensional topic with multiple interpretations. We  
46 define organizational sustainability according to Dahlsrud's (2008) analysis, which includes an  
47 organization's environmental impacts, the relationships between business and society,  
48 financial aspects, and interactions with stakeholders. Furthermore, following Dahlsrud (2008),  
49 we consider sustainability actions voluntary rather than required by law.  
50  
51

52  
53 Emotions in organizations are a complex phenomenon. They appear to be essentially social,  
54 emerging within social collectives (Rafaeli and Worline, 2001). Organizational-level outcomes  
55 and decision-making are essentially affected by employees' emotions (Huy, 2011; Lebel, 2017;  
56 Rothman and Melwani, 2017). Due to its complexity, the concept of emotions is difficult to  
57 define, and there is no single, accurate definition (Scarantino, 2012). Based on earlier  
58 definitions, we define emotions as physical states associated with neurophysiological changes  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 related to thoughts, behavioural responses, and a degree of pleasure or displeasure (Ekman and  
4 Davidson, 1994; Damasio, 1998; Cabanac, 2002).  
5

6 Research has shown that organizational sustainability is associated with both positive and  
7 negative emotions. Employees' perceptions of organizational sustainability trigger not only  
8 behavioural and attitudinal responses but also emotional responses (Rupp *et al.*, 2006).  
9 Emotional responses range from utterly positive emotions, such as pride, joy, and satisfaction,  
10 to negative emotions, such as fear, shame, cynicism, and irritation (Russell and Ashkanasy,  
11 2007; Onkila, 2015), and vary depending on employee perceptions and experiences of  
12 organizational sustainability (Mäkelä *et al.*, 2018).  
13  
14  
15

16 Multiple studies have shown that positive experiences of organizational sustainability,  
17 especially feelings of pride, are an important source of employees' affective commitment to  
18 the employer (e.g., Ditlev-Simonsen, 2015). Such feelings of pride arise especially as a result  
19 of actions and policies aimed at improving sustainability performance and responsibility  
20 towards stakeholders (McNamara *et al.*, 2017; El Akremi *et al.*, 2018), sustainability initiatives  
21 and accomplishments (Potoski and Callery, 2018), and a climate promoting sustainability  
22 within an organization (Rodell *et al.*, 2017). However, studies have also highlighted the  
23 complexity of the relationships between employees' perceptions and experiences of  
24 sustainability and their pride and affective commitment. Such relationships are influenced by  
25 multiple mediating factors, such as leadership styles (Allen *et al.*, 2017), job satisfaction, and  
26 employees' attitudes (Rahman *et al.*, 2016).  
27  
28  
29  
30

31 Prior research has further shown that emotions towards organizational sustainability eventually  
32 influence how sustainability is spoken of and how organizational members take sustainability  
33 actions. Fineman (1996) showed that managers use emotion-related arguments to justify their  
34 attitudes towards an organization's actions (or lack thereof) to go green. Wright and Nyberg  
35 (2012) demonstrated that societal emotions impact organizational discourses on climate  
36 change. Besides the way in which sustainability is spoken of, emotions also influence concrete  
37 actions. Positive emotions, such as pride, may offer solid ground for organizational  
38 sustainability, while negative emotions, such as shame, may hinder sustainability  
39 improvements (Mäkelä *et al.*, 2018). Sekerka and Stimel (2012) proposed a model for  
40 environmental sustainability decision-making and showed that negative emotions may hinder  
41 and positive emotions may promote sustainability action. On the other hand, an eagerness to  
42 avoid negative emotions, such as shame, may also increase employees' desire to engage in  
43 sustainability action (Carrus *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, emotions attached to sustainability  
44 influence corporate decision-making. Muller *et al.* (2014) showed that organizational  
45 members' collective empathy is a basis for managerial decision-making and organizational  
46 approaches to corporate philanthropy. Moreover, emotions influence sustainability actions in  
47 wider contexts. Fontana *et al.* (2021) studied negative emotions (fear and anger) in apparel  
48 supply chains in Bangladesh and Pakistan after the Rana Plaza incident, the collapse of garment  
49 factory. The authors found that the incident resulted in market and social tensions caused by  
50 buyers', workers', and societies' demand for more attention to labourers' working conditions.  
51 These tensions led to different sustainability actions in the two countries. In one country,  
52 limited action was taken because the economic burden of sustainability initiatives and the  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 likelihood of unrest among employees were considered too high, while in another country,  
4 sustainability was considered to offer competitive advantages in the markets.  
5

6 Recent research has demonstrated that sustainability-related emotional outcomes are not static  
7 but give rise to tensions and require negotiations (Mitra and Buzzanell, 2017). When such tense  
8 situations arise, organizations employ strategies to manage them (Daddi *et al.*, 2019). Such  
9 strategies may involve reconciling conflicting goals, making decisions, or balancing competing  
10 aims (Van der Byl and Slawinski, 2015). While this tendency to solve tensions on the  
11 organizational level has been shown, the strategies for solving emotionally laden tensions on  
12 the individual level are still poorly understood. It remains unknown how employees react to  
13 and aim to resolve emotionally tense situations and what this implies for their actions for  
14 sustainability. This understanding is crucial, since emotional experiences of organizational  
15 sustainability can powerfully explain how employees act (or do not act) for sustainability.  
16  
17  
18  
19

### 20 21 **Sensemaking approaches to emotional tensions**

22 Emotionally tense experiences trigger sensemaking. Sensemaking is usually thought to be  
23 triggered by actions or circumstances whose meaning is unclear or of which one has conflicting  
24 expectations (Maguire *et al.*, 2011). With sensemaking, people give meaning to experiences  
25 (Weick, 1995).  
26  
27

28 Weick (1993, 1995) introduced the concept of sensemaking to organizational studies to explore  
29 how organizations cope with uncertain or ambiguous situations. Sensemaking refers to the way  
30 in which members of an organization continuously construct intersubjective realities through  
31 communication and interaction (Weick, 1995). It is triggered when an event causes an  
32 individual to challenge a previous understanding under new circumstances and gives rise to a  
33 new, ambiguous phenomenon (Maguire *et al.*, 2011). For example, emotionally tense views on  
34 organizational sustainability are seen as triggering a process in which many agents act and react  
35 to each other (Nijhof and Jeurissen, 2006), which may cause confusion (Dahlsrud, 2008; Ziek,  
36 2009) and high equivocality (Weick, 1995). Such situations in organizations lack clarity and  
37 consistency and lead to a search for meaning because of too much or too equivocal information  
38 (van der Heijden *et al.*, 2010).  
39  
40  
41  
42

43 Emotions are an essential part of sensemaking processes at both the individual and collective  
44 levels (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). They play a critical role in triggering sensemaking  
45 (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014) and in individuals' participation in it (Schmidt and Weiner,  
46 1988). Steigenberger (2015) suggested that emotions are both an input and an outcome of  
47 sensemaking processes and shape the content and motivational accounts of sensemaking.  
48  
49

50 Both positive and negative emotions serve as stimuli for sensemaking processes (Weick, 1993,  
51 1995; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). Sensemaking may take on multiple forms. For example,  
52 narratives help employees take account of their own experiences, which are selected,  
53 organized, and interwoven to answer questions about their individual actions (Riessman, 1993).  
54 Identity work is another form of sensemaking (Weick, 1993). Sensemaking can also influence  
55 how individuals act in conflicting and tense situations (Maitlis, 2005).  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60



## Materials and methods

### *Research context*

This was a case study of a northern European energy company. This company employs thousands of people, and its operations encompass the generation, distribution, and sale of electricity and heat, along with related expert services. It is a public company owned by its stockholders. This firm provides an interesting research context for two main reasons. One reason is its relatively bad public reputation. The other reason is its strong focus on developing organizational sustainability.

The company's bad reputation has frequently been discussed through various channels. For years, it has received low scores in corporate reputation surveys conducted in the country in which it is based. Its poor reputation is also evident in the official ratings of ESPI Rating, which conducts market analyses in the UK, the Netherlands, the Nordic countries, and the Baltic countries. The company's ratings are well below the industry average. One year, it was even voted in the top five most hated companies in its country. This bad reputation extends to external stakeholders' perceptions of its sustainability approach.

On the other hand, the company has a broad background in and a strong demand for sustainability. The sustainability work in the company is directed by a sustainability director, who answers to the board of directors. A member of the board handles sustainability issues, which are embedded in its corporate strategy. The company has published environmental and sustainability reports for a long time and is nationally recognized for its sustainability reporting. It participates in multiple sustainability projects, and some of its employees are active members of various sustainability networks. The company is also listed in several sustainability indexes (e.g., the Dow Jones Sustainability World Index and the Carbon Disclosure Leadership Index). Nevertheless, it continues to face evolving sustainability requirements due to the significant environmental impacts of the energy industry.

### *Research material*

This study focused on how employees of the case company make sense of emotionally tense experiences related to organizational sustainability. We adopted the constructionist and interpretative research approach (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008; Weick, 1995), which characterizes sensemaking studies (e.g., van der Heijden *et al.*, 2010).

The research material consisted of qualitative, in-depth interviews with employees. All interviews focused on the meaning of sustainability in the organization and encompassed four themes: a description of the interviewee's job, views on sustainability in the company, internal sustainability management and communication, and external sustainability management and communication. All topics were openly discussed from the viewpoint of the employees' daily work.

A total of 25 people were interviewed. The interviews lasted from 19 to 65 minutes. The interview data are summarized in Table I in the Appendix. The interviewees were selected in cooperation with company representatives. The researchers established selection criteria according to which company representatives named individuals for the interviews. To ensure

1  
2  
3 that the interviewees understood the firm's sustainability approach, the focus was on employees  
4 with knowledge and experience of sustainability in the company. The interviews included  
5 individuals from two levels of the organizational hierarchy: nine managers (e.g., the heads of  
6 finance, human resources, and communications) and 16 experts (e.g., environmental engineers,  
7 environmental health and safety managers, and business development managers). Our selection  
8 criteria excluded shop floor employees from the interviews.  
9  
10

### 11 12 *Interview data analysis*

13  
14 We adopted Gioia *et al.*'s (2013) four-stage data analysis to move from data to theoretical  
15 interpretations and used Atlas.ti for the analysis. Although here we describe it as a series of  
16 chronological stages, the analysis moved back and forth between the stages and the literature  
17 and was thus an iterative process. The stages are detailed below and described in Figure 1.  
18  
19

### 20 21 **Figure 1** Emotionally tense experience in the data

22  
23 Based on Gioia *et al.* (2013), the first stage encompassed the development of detailed  
24 descriptions. First, we identified parts of the interviews related to the interviewees' emotionally  
25 tense experiences. We then analysed each part separately, based on how sustainability was  
26 approached and connected to emotions. Next, we compared these parts and compiled a list of  
27 first-order concepts. We were thus able to identify differences in how tension was described  
28 and how interviewees reacted to it, as well as differences in terminology and intensity, sources  
29 of interaction, and actions for sustainability.  
30  
31

32  
33 In the second stage, we compared the coded sections for each first-order concept, especially  
34 the ways in which emotions were related to emotionally tense experiences. We identified  
35 differences in the descriptions of emotions, the sensemaking mechanisms employed to resolve  
36 tensions, the sources from which views of negative sustainability perceptions were derived, the  
37 intensity of the terminology used to describe tensions, and engagement in sustainability while  
38 making sense of tensions. Based on this, we identified second-order concepts to summarize the  
39 above mentioned differences. It was apparent in the empirical data that expressions of pride  
40 and satisfaction were especially related to the resolution of tense experiences.  
41  
42

43  
44 In the third stage, we integrated the previous two stages of the analysis with the theory of  
45 sensemaking to identify sensemaking mechanisms described in the literature. We first noted  
46 that the empirical findings pointed to three emotionally laden categories: defending pride,  
47 maintaining pride, and settling with satisfaction. This helped us identify how sensemaking was  
48 used in the three categories and included going back and forth between the empirical data and  
49 sensemaking literature. In this phase, we explored the characteristics of each category based  
50 on the second-order concepts, emotional aspects, the level of tension, and indications of  
51 employee action. We continued going back and forth between our empirical data, key themes,  
52 and the literature. Thus, we identified three sensemaking mechanisms for resolving and  
53 explaining the emotionally tense experiences: rational sensemaking, experiential sensemaking,  
54 and identity work.  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

### Sensemaking for resolving emotional tensions related to organizational sustainability

Emotional tensions related to organizational sustainability trigger sensemaking. In the studied case, the interviewees highlighted the importance of sustainability in their organization and used positive, emotionally laden expressions signifying pride and satisfaction. All interviewees were aware of the firm's poor sustainability reputation and employed multiple types of sensemaking, such as rationality and counterarguments, narratives, and identity work, to refute these perceptions. Notably, almost all interviewees employed all three types of sensemaking—rational sensemaking, experiential sensemaking, and identity work—while discussing sustainability, constantly moving from one type to another.

#### *Resolution through rational sensemaking*

Rational sensemaking was used to question negative external perceptions and thus resolve emotionally ambivalent experiences. This allowed the interviewees to defend their pride in organizational sustainability. They deployed rational arguments, including facts and figures, and stressed the firm's sustainability achievements. This suggests deliberate and cognitive reasoning. Rational sensemaking was triggered when employees experienced a pronounced mismatch between their feelings of pride and external stakeholders' negative perceptions. The interviewees expressed the need to communicate more extensively on sustainability and spread "reliable", "black-and-white information" (Interview 16). They suggested that resolving the mismatch required honest external communication that could allay external suspicions. The following interview extract exemplifies how the interviewees resolved the tension by stressing facts, figures, and achievements, thus defending their pride:

Then, of course, the important thing above all is that it's the kind of company you can be proud of. It is said that the relationship with the media in particular has been difficult, and it's not often that you see anything positive written about [name of the company] in the press. It's certainly something like with this sustainability issue, that it's done in such a way that, regardless of what is written about it with a negative tone, you know the good that we do, and it's through those examples that we can still be proud of our employer. (Interview 7)

Rational sensemaking was employed particularly in cases in which the experienced tension was particularly high. This was reflected in the use of extreme terms and expressions when contrasting self-experienced pride with the hostility of external stakeholders. An interviewee even suggested that external stakeholders considered the company evil (Interview 8). According to the interviewees, this external negativity was mainly based on two sources: general perceptions of the "bad public image of the company" and more concrete media discussions and face-to-face conversations. The following extract exemplifies how such intensity was constructed using emotionally charged expressions, such as "bad guy," "cheating," "disliking," and "lying":

When talking about social responsibility, we are seen as a sort of bad guy ... we're not particularly liked. We're not attractive, and even when we do good, the first thought is that we're up to something—that we're still cheating. (Interview 8)

Rational sensemaking also had implications for employees' actions towards sustainability, increasing their engagement in sustainability, as well as their awareness of the need for

1  
2  
3 changes. The interviewees described concrete actions that needed to be taken to improve the  
4 company's negative image. They suggested that the company needed to be more proactive in  
5 addressing any complaints, improving its social and economic sustainability performance, and  
6 engaging with stakeholders in face-to-face meetings to present specific facts and figures.  
7 However, many interviewees stated that although this was already being done, external  
8 stakeholders were not responsive to their communication. The following interview extract  
9 exemplifies how such change agency was expressed:

10  
11  
12  
13 So, it might be worth focusing on what we have. And of course, there needs to be a focus on  
14 developing new things and not just be in the position of being blamed. In other words, important  
15 things also include this world of reality [sustainable development work] and communicating the  
16 good in it. In my opinion, there could be more of that. (Interview 4)

### 17 18 19 *Resolution through experiential sensemaking*

20  
21 Experiential sensemaking was used to shift attention from external negativity to internal,  
22 emotionally positive experiences. This also allowed organizational members to maintain their  
23 pride. Experiential sensemaking was predominantly based on narratives contrasting the  
24 interviewees' positive emotional experiences with external stakeholders' negative attitudes.  
25 Narratives focused on daily and practical descriptions of change processes within the firm and  
26 organization-wide sustainability integration, which was described as a notable achievement.  
27 Sustainability was stressed as an organization-wide approach.

28  
29 The narratives mostly highlighted two aspects. First, they described how well sustainability  
30 practices were internally distributed. Second, they emphasized how strategically important, and  
31 thus prioritized, they were in the firm. They narrated situations and changes indicating that  
32 sustainability was important and meaningful throughout the company. These stories included  
33 multiple practical examples: all the projects reflected the principles of sustainable  
34 development; the company held active internal sustainable development days, during which  
35 good practices were spread; the company had a broad background in sustainability; there was  
36 a high level of cooperation for sustainability within the company; and, overall, a lot of work  
37 had been done on sustainability. The belief in a well-distributed sustainability approach among  
38 all organizational members was a common theme in the narratives. The interviewees also  
39 stressed that sustainability was a strategically important differentiating factor for the company.  
40 The following interview extract exemplifies this type of sensemaking:

41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47 I've been positively surprised since the moment I came to work here that it [sustainability] really  
48 is our mission and our strategy, and also here in this division. It's part of the purpose of our  
49 operations, and it is in an important position. ... It started with environmental thinking and then  
50 gradually spread, and there are still areas that it hasn't quite reached, but it's expanding to social  
51 and financial aspects, and it really is in upper management, in the strategy—at least in our  
52 division. (Interview 6)

53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65  
66  
67  
68  
69  
70  
71  
72  
73  
74  
75  
76  
77  
78  
79  
80  
81  
82  
83  
84  
85  
86  
87  
88  
89  
90  
91  
92  
93  
94  
95  
96  
97  
98  
99  
100  
101  
102  
103  
104  
105  
106  
107  
108  
109  
110  
111  
112  
113  
114  
115  
116  
117  
118  
119  
120  
121  
122  
123  
124  
125  
126  
127  
128  
129  
130  
131  
132  
133  
134  
135  
136  
137  
138  
139  
140  
141  
142  
143  
144  
145  
146  
147  
148  
149  
150  
151  
152  
153  
154  
155  
156  
157  
158  
159  
160  
161  
162  
163  
164  
165  
166  
167  
168  
169  
170  
171  
172  
173  
174  
175  
176  
177  
178  
179  
180  
181  
182  
183  
184  
185  
186  
187  
188  
189  
190  
191  
192  
193  
194  
195  
196  
197  
198  
199  
200  
201  
202  
203  
204  
205  
206  
207  
208  
209  
210  
211  
212  
213  
214  
215  
216  
217  
218  
219  
220  
221  
222  
223  
224  
225  
226  
227  
228  
229  
230  
231  
232  
233  
234  
235  
236  
237  
238  
239  
240  
241  
242  
243  
244  
245  
246  
247  
248  
249  
250  
251  
252  
253  
254  
255  
256  
257  
258  
259  
260  
261  
262  
263  
264  
265  
266  
267  
268  
269  
270  
271  
272  
273  
274  
275  
276  
277  
278  
279  
280  
281  
282  
283  
284  
285  
286  
287  
288  
289  
290  
291  
292  
293  
294  
295  
296  
297  
298  
299  
300  
301  
302  
303  
304  
305  
306  
307  
308  
309  
310  
311  
312  
313  
314  
315  
316  
317  
318  
319  
320  
321  
322  
323  
324  
325  
326  
327  
328  
329  
330  
331  
332  
333  
334  
335  
336  
337  
338  
339  
340  
341  
342  
343  
344  
345  
346  
347  
348  
349  
350  
351  
352  
353  
354  
355  
356  
357  
358  
359  
360  
361  
362  
363  
364  
365  
366  
367  
368  
369  
370  
371  
372  
373  
374  
375  
376  
377  
378  
379  
380  
381  
382  
383  
384  
385  
386  
387  
388  
389  
390  
391  
392  
393  
394  
395  
396  
397  
398  
399  
400  
401  
402  
403  
404  
405  
406  
407  
408  
409  
410  
411  
412  
413  
414  
415  
416  
417  
418  
419  
420  
421  
422  
423  
424  
425  
426  
427  
428  
429  
430  
431  
432  
433  
434  
435  
436  
437  
438  
439  
440  
441  
442  
443  
444  
445  
446  
447  
448  
449  
450  
451  
452  
453  
454  
455  
456  
457  
458  
459  
460  
461  
462  
463  
464  
465  
466  
467  
468  
469  
470  
471  
472  
473  
474  
475  
476  
477  
478  
479  
480  
481  
482  
483  
484  
485  
486  
487  
488  
489  
490  
491  
492  
493  
494  
495  
496  
497  
498  
499  
500  
501  
502  
503  
504  
505  
506  
507  
508  
509  
510  
511  
512  
513  
514  
515  
516  
517  
518  
519  
520  
521  
522  
523  
524  
525  
526  
527  
528  
529  
530  
531  
532  
533  
534  
535  
536  
537  
538  
539  
540  
541  
542  
543  
544  
545  
546  
547  
548  
549  
550  
551  
552  
553  
554  
555  
556  
557  
558  
559  
560  
561  
562  
563  
564  
565  
566  
567  
568  
569  
570  
571  
572  
573  
574  
575  
576  
577  
578  
579  
580  
581  
582  
583  
584  
585  
586  
587  
588  
589  
590  
591  
592  
593  
594  
595  
596  
597  
598  
599  
600  
601  
602  
603  
604  
605  
606  
607  
608  
609  
610  
611  
612  
613  
614  
615  
616  
617  
618  
619  
620  
621  
622  
623  
624  
625  
626  
627  
628  
629  
630  
631  
632  
633  
634  
635  
636  
637  
638  
639  
640  
641  
642  
643  
644  
645  
646  
647  
648  
649  
650  
651  
652  
653  
654  
655  
656  
657  
658  
659  
660  
661  
662  
663  
664  
665  
666  
667  
668  
669  
670  
671  
672  
673  
674  
675  
676  
677  
678  
679  
680  
681  
682  
683  
684  
685  
686  
687  
688  
689  
690  
691  
692  
693  
694  
695  
696  
697  
698  
699  
700  
701  
702  
703  
704  
705  
706  
707  
708  
709  
710  
711  
712  
713  
714  
715  
716  
717  
718  
719  
720  
721  
722  
723  
724  
725  
726  
727  
728  
729  
730  
731  
732  
733  
734  
735  
736  
737  
738  
739  
740  
741  
742  
743  
744  
745  
746  
747  
748  
749  
750  
751  
752  
753  
754  
755  
756  
757  
758  
759  
760  
761  
762  
763  
764  
765  
766  
767  
768  
769  
770  
771  
772  
773  
774  
775  
776  
777  
778  
779  
780  
781  
782  
783  
784  
785  
786  
787  
788  
789  
790  
791  
792  
793  
794  
795  
796  
797  
798  
799  
800  
801  
802  
803  
804  
805  
806  
807  
808  
809  
810  
811  
812  
813  
814  
815  
816  
817  
818  
819  
820  
821  
822  
823  
824  
825  
826  
827  
828  
829  
830  
831  
832  
833  
834  
835  
836  
837  
838  
839  
840  
841  
842  
843  
844  
845  
846  
847  
848  
849  
850  
851  
852  
853  
854  
855  
856  
857  
858  
859  
860  
861  
862  
863  
864  
865  
866  
867  
868  
869  
870  
871  
872  
873  
874  
875  
876  
877  
878  
879  
880  
881  
882  
883  
884  
885  
886  
887  
888  
889  
890  
891  
892  
893  
894  
895  
896  
897  
898  
899  
900  
901  
902  
903  
904  
905  
906  
907  
908  
909  
910  
911  
912  
913  
914  
915  
916  
917  
918  
919  
920  
921  
922  
923  
924  
925  
926  
927  
928  
929  
930  
931  
932  
933  
934  
935  
936  
937  
938  
939  
940  
941  
942  
943  
944  
945  
946  
947  
948  
949  
950  
951  
952  
953  
954  
955  
956  
957  
958  
959  
960  
961  
962  
963  
964  
965  
966  
967  
968  
969  
970  
971  
972  
973  
974  
975  
976  
977  
978  
979  
980  
981  
982  
983  
984  
985  
986  
987  
988  
989  
990  
991  
992  
993  
994  
995  
996  
997  
998  
999  
1000

Experiential sensemaking was employed particularly in cases in which tensions were experienced as rather moderate. In these cases, the terms and descriptions used when referring to external stakeholders' negative perceptions were not as extreme as when rational sensemaking was employed. The interviewees still maintained that external stakeholders were suspicious of the company but did not use descriptions of hostility. Instead, when speaking of

external stakeholders' approaches to the firm or organizational members to ask about issues concerning sustainability, they attributed the reasons to having a "critical question" (Interview 7) or a complaint (Interview 6) and acknowledged that society might react negatively to the company's sustainability operations (Interview 8). The following interview extract exemplifies how such expressions were used:

Sometimes there are fairly concrete questions, such as "Well, what about your emissions?" As a matter of fact, there can be more questions like this, and you can generally answer pretty well and with pride. Even when the questions are pretty critical, the truth is generally rather positive. (Interview 7)

This kind of sensemaking did not lead to taking action for changes, as rational sensemaking did. However, it was based on the view that widespread organizational sustainability commitment promoted each organizational member's ability to act. Shared practices provided the framework for such action. A need for changes in sustainability practices was not identified. Such a view was constantly brought forth in the interviews as an achievement within the firm. The interviewees noted that individuals could take action for sustainability according to shared guidelines. This is exemplified in the following interview extract:

[Describing what was done well in the company.] Here in my unit, I have cooperated with communications in the same organization, and I have found it [sustainability communication] very functional. I have liked it; I have found it very good. First of all, communication takes place; they have great ideas about how things can be achieved in my work, or they promote my communications matter really well and in things that I wouldn't even have considered [gives a concrete example]. (Interview 10)

### *Resolution through identity work*

Sensemaking through identity work was also used to narrow the gap between the two opposite perceptions and resolve emotional tensions. It allowed organizational members to settle with the satisfaction they feel with organizational sustainability and argue that the two opposite views were not that apart from each other. To narrow the gap, the interviewees invoked internal and external limitations to sustainability and used very mild expressions to describe the mismatch between their satisfaction with organizational sustainability and external stakeholders' negative views.

The interviewees invoked limitations to their own identity, organizational identity, and industrial characteristics to reduce the gap between the two opposing perspectives. They first stressed the congruence between personal and organizational values. From the perspective of personal values, they connected sustainability, for example, to the need to preserve the planet for their children and observe environmental laws. However, the interviewees constructed a somewhat limited personal and organizational sustainability identity. The interviewees constructed an identity of, for example, "light green experts" who believed in sustainability at home but were not fanatic about sustainability issues. For example, they stated that they consumed organic products, tried to save materials, used wood to heat their homes, recycled, and made other personal sustainability-related choices. They also claimed that organizational-level values matched their own. However, the sustainability approach was also seen as somewhat limited. The interviewees maintained that sustainability was not the top priority

1  
2  
3 among employees or external stakeholders. They also narrowed the gap between their own  
4 positive emotions and bad publicity by naturalizing the firm's heavy environmental impact and  
5 presenting negative attitudes as a feature of the industry. They explained that the energy  
6 industry is environmentally intensive, and therefore negative attitudes towards it were a natural  
7 consequence. However, conducting operations in this energy-intensive sector in a sustainable  
8 and efficient manner would fit their "light green" identities well. The following extract  
9 exemplifies how such identity work was done in the interviews:  
10  
11

12  
13 I would call myself "light green." Environmental issues have always been important for me, and  
14 at university I studied communication and environmental science. Communication and  
15 sustainable development have always been part of my work. Previously, I was a consultant, and  
16 I drew up environmental reports, so it's an area, content-wise, that's very close and dear to me.  
17 In my personal life, too, I try to live like that—recycling, sorting and living a little bit green. It's  
18 important to me, so this job description fits really well with me. (Interview 6)  
19  
20

21 The tension perceived in these cases was relatively low, and the terms used by the interviewees  
22 to describe the two opposite views were rather neutral. The interviewees still mentioned their  
23 employer's poor external reputation but considered it a given, or even natural, for a company  
24 within this industry. Instead of feeling shame due to bad publicity, they attached positive  
25 emotions, especially satisfaction, to the firm's sustainability approach. Interviewees still  
26 believed that multiple external stakeholders were naturally interested in the company's  
27 sustainability issues. They felt that there was, for example, a degree of obscurity surrounding  
28 the firm's interactions and reputation, although they described no direct interaction with  
29 stakeholders. The following interview extract exemplifies how the intensity of opposite views  
30 was described in such cases:  
31  
32  
33

34 I would imagine that it [organizational sustainability communication and reporting] could interest  
35 our customers, since we have industrial customers. So, they might be interested in knowing the  
36 type of company they buy their products from. And I'll point out that I'm the one who separately  
37 reports to the authorities. This report isn't really reviewed by the authorities because they have  
38 their own systems and their own perspectives. They aren't really interested in sustainable  
39 development but rather in facts, such as the amount of emissions to air and water, among other  
40 things. (Interview 4)  
41  
42  
43

44 Sensemaking through identity work had implications for sustainability action, placing clear  
45 limitations on it. It constructed both organizational and individual identities as moderately  
46 green (or "light green"), with the interviewees mentioning small and rather obvious actions for  
47 sustainability both at work and at home, such as saving energy. They also noted that this was  
48 not the most important thing to do. This is exemplified in the following interview extract:  
49  
50

51 [Regarding the significance of sustainable development in the company.] I wouldn't say that it is  
52 necessarily the top priority in all employees' minds, so it's not the core of everything in this sense.  
53 ... It is certainly present all the time, in one way or another, but perhaps not in the way one might  
54 imagine, with every workstation constantly being reminded and everyone constantly thinking,  
55 "Let us do this or that." I don't quite believe it because many things that we do don't really have  
56 a big influence. We have a vast number of office workers, so it's difficult to influence matters.  
57 (Interview 7)  
58  
59  
60

### *Summary of the findings*

To resolve emotionally tense experiences related to organizational sustainability, employees use different sensemaking mechanisms: rational sensemaking, experiential sensemaking, and identity work. The key features of these sensemaking processes are summarized in Table I. Rational sensemaking is deliberate cognitive reasoning and processing (Molecke, 2014) relying on rational accounts (Maitlis, 2005) that lead to the refutation of negative perspectives using factual counterarguments (Billig, 1996). By creating rational accounts (Maitlis, 2005), such sensemaking fosters engagement in sustainability and promotes action. Experiential sensemaking utilizes previous experience to resolve situations (Parry, 2003). The narrative features of sensemaking (Riessman, 1993) turn attention to a more positive experience of organizational sustainability. Using this type of sensemaking, action for sustainability is framed as collective, with all organizational members having the capacity to act, but a need for changes in sustainability practices is not perceived. Thus, action is mainly taken in the form of habitual agency that reproduces previously implemented practices (Fan and Zietsma, 2017). Identity work engages an identity-based perspective in sensemaking (Weick, 1995) to narrow the gap between the two opposite perspectives. Organizational members refer to limitations and use mild language. Identity work is frequently employed in sensemaking, especially when a threat to identity is perceived (Rothausen *et al.*, 2017). It imposes limitations on action for sustainability and constructs moderately green individual and organizational identities.

**Table I** Sensemaking types for resolving emotional tensions related to organizational sustainability

## **Discussion**

### *Contributions to literature*

In this study, we have shown how employees aim to solve emotionally tense experiences related with organizational sustainability and what it implies for employee sustainability action. Our study makes two contributions to the literature. We will discuss these in the following from the point of view of emotional tensions, and employee participation in organizational sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR).

First, our study expands the literature on emotional tensions in organizational sustainability and CSR. As the concepts of organizational sustainability and CSR are considered as near-site concepts, or often even as sharing same meanings, our study contributes both to CSR and organizational sustainability research on emotions. Prior studies have shown that both positive and negative emotions are attached to organizational sustainability (Fineman, 1996; Russell and Ashkanasy, 2007) and that a good sustainability reputation leads to positive emotions, such as pride and satisfaction (Morales-Raya *et al.*, 2019). However, it was not previously understood how employees deal with emotionally tense situations. Our study shows that when experiencing such situations, employees tend to defend positive views of their employer by engaging in three types of sensemaking. Thus, this study's findings are not in line with suggestions that a bad sustainability reputation creates feelings of shame among employees

1  
2  
3 (Onkila, 2015). Despite being aware of the organization's bad reputation, employees do not  
4 entertain negative feelings associated with it. Instead, they use argumentation, narratives, and  
5 identity work to present reasons, explanations, justifications, and limitations to overrule,  
6 question, or undermine such emotions. The sensemaking process is multifaceted, and  
7 employees constantly move from one type to another. Thus, unlike prior studies suggesting  
8 that congruence between firms' sustainability actions and society's perception thereof creates  
9 positive emotions, such as pride (Fineman, 1996; Wright and Nyberg, 2012), we found that  
10 emotions are elicited by personal and organizational experiences and are strenuously defended  
11 when threatened.  
12  
13  
14

15 **Second, our study provides insights into how organizational sustainability and CSR are**  
16 **practiced among employees within organizations.** Prior research has suggested that employee  
17 participation in organizational sustainability triggers emotional responses (Rupp *et al.*, 2006).  
18 However, our findings show that sensemaking based on emotions can also result in different  
19 levels of action. Emotional responses are not only a result of employee engagement in  
20 organizational sustainability but also a starting point for different levels of action. While Fan  
21 and Zietsma (2017) suggested that emotions enable and affect agency and facilitate reflexivity,  
22 commitment, and engagement, in our study, only rational sensemaking enabled active  
23 engagement. Conversely, when engaging in experiential sensemaking and identity work, action  
24 was only habitual or even limited, without an evaluative or critical approach to sustainability  
25 practices. Thus, it is important to explore how such tense situations can be managed within  
26 organizations so that more critical approaches and discussions that promote changes for  
27 sustainability can be enabled instead of maintaining the status quo and reproducing habitual  
28 actions by defending positive emotions. **Based on our study, we found an interesting aspect**  
29 **enforcing organizational sustainability: negative sustainability reputation of the employer may**  
30 **actually turn employees to improving sustainability actions and their commitment to**  
31 **sustainability. This seems to be a result of their tendency to defend sustainability position of**  
32 **the employing organization.**  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39

#### 40 ***Practical contributions***

41 Our findings also have practical implications for organizations that have poor sustainability  
42 reputations despite solid sustainability performances. Experiential sensemaking shows that  
43 employees rely on their employers to implement and communicate sustainability actions and  
44 practices. In our case, for example, employees were more interested in participating in hands-  
45 on sustainability approaches and less interested in reading about large-scale sustainability  
46 projects (i.e., sponsorship of a national football team) in annual sustainability reports or internal  
47 newsletters. We found that it is important for employees to have a personal experience of  
48 sustainability, and especially of success stories, to build on their pride. Organizations with poor  
49 sustainability reputations should constantly disseminate information on such actions to  
50 employees and other stakeholders. This can help reduce employees' anxiety, thereby reducing  
51 emotional tensions and generating motivation to defend and maintain pride in the organization.  
52 It can also give them confidence in dealing with critical external voices. We encourage  
53 discussions within organizations on such emotionally tense experiences. Our results suggest  
54 that holding only positive views within an organization leads to maintaining the status quo and  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60



1  
2  
3 reproducing ingrained habits. Sustainability still requires drastic changes and improvements in  
4 businesses. We suggest that enabling critical voices in internal organizational sustainability  
5 processes is essential for encouraging further improvement and change.  
6

7  
8 Overall, these findings show the importance of level of sustainability communication with all  
9 types of organizations. Based on our findings, it is important for organizations to connect with  
10 employees through authentic stories to convince them that everything possible is being done to  
11 improve the sustainability reputation. This does not only help in opening both sided  
12 communication within the company, but also in creating a dialogue with the community. The  
13 employees who receive the story start to own it, and they take these stories to the communities  
14 where they live and help to build the organizational sustainability reputation. Employees also  
15 bring authentic feedback from the community, which helps the organization adjust its actions  
16 and narrative. In this process of dialogue, the organization may then start building a positive  
17 sustainability reputation.  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22

### 23 *Limitations and future research*

24  
25 This study has certain limitations. First, we studied only one company. Future studies should  
26 explore this phenomenon in more detail and focus on how such tensions may be experienced  
27 by different stakeholders, such as employees, the media, and large audiences. They should also  
28 investigate sustainability issues that lead to emotionally tense situations by examining multiple  
29 organizations across several industries, countries, and cultures. Second, because multiple  
30 stakeholders influence corporate environmental issues, future studies should conduct more in-  
31 depth investigations of organizations, including individuals with less engagement in  
32 organizational sustainability (e.g., shop floor employees). Similarly, the role of the media as  
33 sustainability stakeholders and their relationship with other stakeholders also need to be further  
34 explored. Third, we recommend a deeper exploration of how employees' emotions arise in  
35 various situations, including internal employee meetings and public communications, and how  
36 internal sustainability data are measured and documented. This would offer a broader  
37 understanding of employees' emotions and related tensions in organizational contexts.  
38 Fourthly, acknowledging the strong role of organizational culture influencing organizational  
39 sustainability and sensemaking within organizations, we limited our study more  
40 communicative features of sustainability and sensemaking. However, we highlight as an  
41 important future research topic analysis on how cultural features of sustainability are  
42 meaningful in such tense situations, and how sensemaking in such situations is influencing and  
43 influenced by organizational culture.  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50

### 51 **Conclusions**

52  
53  
54 Emotionally tense experiences related to organizational sustainability trigger sensemaking to  
55 resolve situations. Different employees engage in sensemaking in different ways hence,  
56 employees' actions to resolve the situation are also diverse in nature. We identified three types  
57 of sensemaking: rational sensemaking, experiential sensemaking, and identity work. When  
58 experiencing tense situations, employees respond by refuting negative external perceptions  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 with facts and figures, shifting attention to positive internal experiences, or narrowing the gap  
4 and the level of tension through identity work that constructs “light green” identities on both  
5 the individual and organizational levels. Sensemaking mechanisms employ counterarguments,  
6 narratives, and choice of terminology. Sensemaking has implications for employees’ actions  
7 for sustainability. While one type promotes change, another encourages only limited action.  
8 Our empirical findings also highlight the mixed use of sensemaking mechanisms in  
9 emotionally tense situations. The interviewees constantly moved between the three types of  
10 sensemaking, which indicates the complexity of the experience and its resolutions.  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16

## 17 References

18  
19 Allen, G.W., Attoh, P.A. and Gong, T. (2017), “Transformational leadership and affective  
20 organizational commitment: mediating roles of perceived social responsibility and  
21 organizational identification”, *Social Responsibility Journal*, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 585-600, doi:  
22 10.1108/SRJ-11-2016-0193.  
23

24  
25 Andersson, L. and Bateman, T. (2000), “Individual environmental initiative: championing  
26 natural environmental issues in U.S. business organizations”, *Academy of Management*  
27 *Journal*, Vol. 43 No. 4, pp. 548-570, doi: 10.5465/1556355.  
28

29  
30 Billig, M. (1996), *Arguing and thinking: a rhetorical approach to social psychology*,  
31 Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.  
32

33  
34 Blomfield, J.M., Troth, A.C. and Jordan, P.J. (2016), “Emotional thresholds and change agent  
35 success in corporate sustainability”, Ashkanasy, N.M, Härtel, C.E.J and Zerbe, W.J. (Eds.),  
36 *Emotions and Organizational Governance* (Research on Emotion in Organizations, Vol. 12).  
37 Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Bingley, pp. 191-216.  
38

39  
40 Cabanac, M. (2002), “What is emotion?”, *Behavioural Processes*, Vol. 60 No. 2, pp. 69-83,  
41 doi: 10.1016/S0376-6357(02)00078-5.  
42

43  
44 Carrus, G., Passafaro, P. and Bonnes, M. (2008), “Emotions, habits and rational choices in  
45 ecological behaviours: The case of recycling and use of public transportation”, *Journal of*  
46 *Environmental Psychology*, Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 51-62, doi: 10.1016/j.jenvp.2007.09.003.  
47

48  
49 Daddi, T., Ceglia, D., Bianchi, G. and de Barcellos, M.D. (2019), “Paradoxical tensions and  
50 corporate sustainability: a focus on circular economy business cases”, *Corporate Social*  
51 *Responsibility and Environmental Management*, Vol. 26 No. 4, pp. 770-780, doi:  
52 10.1002/csr.1719.  
53

54  
55 Dahlsrud, A. (2008), “How corporate social responsibility is defined: an analysis of 37  
56 definitions”, *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, Vol. 15 No. 1,  
57 pp. 1-13, doi: 10.1002/csr.132.  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Damasio, A.R. (1998), "Emotion in the perspective of an integrated nervous system", *Brain*  
4 *Research Reviews*, Vol. 26 No. 2-3, pp. 83-86, doi: 10.1016/S0165-0173(97)00064-7.  
5

6  
7 Ditlev-Simonsen, C. (2015), "The relationship between Norwegian and Swedish employees'  
8 perception of corporate social responsibility and affective commitment", *Business and Society*,  
9 Vol. 54 No. 2, pp. 229-253, doi: 10.1177/0007650312439534.  
10

11 Ekman, P.E. and Davidson, R.J. (1994), *Series in affective science. The nature of emotion:*  
12 *Fundamental questions*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.  
13

14  
15 El Akremi, A., Gond, J.P., Swaen, V., De Roeck, K. and Igalens, J. (2018), "How do employees  
16 perceive corporate responsibility? Development and validation of a multidimensional  
17 corporate stakeholder responsibility scale", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 44 No. 2, pp. 619-  
18 657, doi: 10.1177/0149206315569311.  
19  
20

21 Eriksson, P. and Kovalainen, A. (2008), *Qualitative Methods in Business Research*, SAGE  
22 Publications, London.  
23

24  
25 Fan, G.H. and Zietsma, C. (2017), "Constructing a shared governance logic: the role of  
26 emotions in enabling dually embedded agency", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 60  
27 No. 6, pp. 2321-2351, doi: 10.5465/amj.2015.0402.  
28  
29

30 Fineman, S. (1996), "Emotions and organizing", Clegg, S.R., Hardy, C. and Nord, W.R. (Eds.),  
31 *Handbook of Organization Studies*, SAGE Publications, London, pp. 543-564.  
32

33  
34 Fontana, E., Atif, M. and Gull, A.A. (2021), "Corporate social responsibility decisions in  
35 apparel supply chains: the role of negative emotions in Bangladesh and Pakistan", *Corporate*  
36 *Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, doi: 10.1002/csr.2139.  
37  
38

39 Gioia, D.A., Corley, K.G. and Hamilton, A.L. (2013), "Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive  
40 research: notes on the Gioia methodology", *Organizational Research Methods*, Vol. 16 No. 1,  
41 pp. 15-31, doi: 10.1177/1094428112452151.  
42  
43

44 Harvey, P., Martinko, M.J. and Borkowski, N. (2017), "Justifying deviant behavior: the role of  
45 attributions and moral emotions", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 141 No. 4, pp. 779-795, doi:  
46 10.1007/s10551-016-3046-5.  
47  
48

49 Highhouse, S., Brooks, M.E. and Gregarus, G. (2009), "An organizational impression  
50 management perspective on the formation of corporate reputations", *Journal of Management*,  
51 Vol. 35 No. 6, pp. 1481-1493, doi: 10.1177/0149206309348788.  
52  
53

54 Huy, Q.N. (2011), "How middle managers' group-focus emotions and social identities  
55 influence strategy implementation", *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 32 No. 13, pp. 1387-  
56 1410, doi: 10.1002/smj.961.  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

Lebel, R.D. (2017), "Moving beyond fight and flight: a contingent model of how the emotional regulation of anger and fear sparks proactivity", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 42 No. 2, pp. 190-206, doi: 10.5465/amr.2014.0368.

Maguire, R., Maguire, P. and Keane, M.T. (2011), "Making sense of surprise: an investigation of the factors influencing surprise judgments", *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, Vol. 37 No. 1, pp. 176-186, doi: 10.1037/a0021609.

Maitlis, S. (2005), "The social processes of organizational sensemaking", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 48 No. 1, pp. 21-49, doi: 10.5465/amj.2005.15993111.

Maitlis, S. and Christianson, M. (2014), "Sensemaking in organizations: taking stock and moving forward", *The Academy of Management Annals*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 57-125, doi: 10.5465/19416520.2014.873177.

Maitlis, S. and Sonenshein, S. (2010), "Sensemaking in crisis and change: inspiration and insights from Weick (1988)", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 47 No. 3, pp. 551-580, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6486.2010.00908.x.

Mäkelä, M., Apostol, O. and Heikkilä, K. (2018), "Pride and fear: emotions in sustainability", Escobar-Pérez, B. and del Mar Miras-Rodríguez, M. (Eds.), *Corporate Social Responsibility: Challenges in Diversity, Accountability and Sustainability* (Management Science - Theory and Applications), Nova Science Publishers, New York, NY, pp. 121-147.

McNamara, T.K., Carapinha, R., Pitt-Catsoupes, M., Valcour, M. and Lobel, S. (2017), "Corporate social responsibility and employee outcomes: the role of country context", *Business Ethics: A European Review*, Vol. 26 No. 4, pp. 413-427, doi: 10.1111/beer.12163.

Mitra, R. and Buzzanell, P.M. (2017), "Communicative tensions of meaningful work: the case of sustainability practitioners", *Human Relations*, Vol. 70 No. 5, pp. 594-616, doi: 10.1177/0018726716663288.

Molecke, G.S. (2014), "Overload and emotion in sensemaking: a two-phase, intuitive-then-rational sensemaking model", *Academy of Management Proceedings*, Vol. 2014 No. 1, 17461, doi: 10.5465/ambpp.2014.17461abstract.

Morales-Raya, M., Martín-Tapia, I. and Ortiz-de-Mandojana, N. (2019), "To be or to seem: the role of environmental practices in corporate environmental reputation", *Organization & Environment*, Vol. 32 No. 3, pp. 309-330, doi: 10.1177/1086026617753154.

Muller, A.R., Pfarrer, M.D. and Little, L.M. (2014), "A theory of collective empathy in corporate philanthropy decisions", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 39 No. 1, pp. 1-21, doi: 10.5465/amr.2012.0031.

1  
2  
3 Nijhof, A. and Jeurissen, R. (2006), "A sensemaking perspective on corporate social  
4 responsibility: introduction to the special issue", *Business Ethics: A European Review*, Vol. 15  
5 No. 4, pp. 316-322, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8608.2006.00455.x.

6  
7  
8 Onkila, T. (2015), "Pride or embarrassment? Employees' emotions and corporate social  
9 responsibility", *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, Vol. 22 No.  
10 4, pp. 222-236, doi: 10.1002/csr.1340.

11  
12  
13 Parry, J., (2003), "Making sense of executive sensemaking: a phenomenological case study  
14 with methodological criticism", *Journal of Health Organization and Management*, Vol. 17 No.  
15 4, pp. 240-263, doi: 10.1108/14777260310494771.

16  
17  
18 Potoski, M. and Callery, P.J. (2018), "Peer communication improves environmental employee  
19 engagement programs: evidence from a quasi-experimental field study", *Journal of Cleaner  
20 Production*, Vol. 172, pp. 1486-1500, doi: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.10.252.

21  
22  
23 Rafaeli, A. and Worline, M. (2001), "Individual emotion in work organizations", *Social  
24 Science Information*, Vol. 40 No. 1, pp. 95-123, doi: 10.1177/053901801040001006.

25  
26  
27 Rahman, S., Haski-Leventhal, D. and Pournader, M. (2016), "The effect of employee CSR  
28 attitudes on job satisfaction and organizational commitment: evidence from the Bangladeshi  
29 banking industry", *Social Responsibility Journal*, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 228-246, doi:  
30 10.1108/SRJ-10-2014-0139.

31  
32  
33 Riessman, C. K. (1993), *Narrative Analysis*, SAGE Publications, Newbury Park, CA.

34  
35  
36 Rodell, J.B., Booth, J.E., Lynch, J.W. and Zipay, K.P. (2017), "Corporate volunteering climate:  
37 mobilizing employee passion for societal causes and inspiring future charitable action",  
38 *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 60 No. 5, pp. 1662-1681, doi: 10.5465/amj.2015.0726.

39  
40  
41 Rothausen, T.J., Henderson, K.E., Arnold, J.K. and Malshe, A. (2017), "Should I stay or should  
42 I go? Identity and well-being in sensemaking about retention and turnover", *Journal of  
43 Management*, Vol. 43 No. 7, pp. 2357-2385, doi: 10.1177/0149206315569312.

44  
45  
46 Rothman, N.B. and Melwani, S. (2017), "Feeling mixed, ambivalent, and in flux: the social  
47 functions of emotional complexity for leaders", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 42 No.  
48 2, pp. 259-282, doi: 10.5465/amr.2014.0355.

49  
50  
51 Rupp, D.E., Ganapathi, J., Aguilera, R.V. and Williams, C.A. (2006), "Employee reactions to  
52 corporate social responsibility: an organizational justice framework", *Journal of  
53 Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 27 No. 4, pp. 537-543, doi: 10.1002/job.380.

54  
55  
56 Russell, S.V. and Ashkanasy, N.M. (2007), "Feeling the heat of global warming: emotion as  
57 an antecedent of pro-environmental behavior", *21st Annual Meeting of the Australian and New  
58 Zealand Academy of Management (ANZAM)*, Vol. 21, pp. 1-15.

1  
2  
3 Scarantino, A. (2012), "How to define emotions scientifically", *Emotion Review*, Vol. 4 No. 4,  
4 pp. 358-368, doi: 10.1177/1754073912445810.  
5

6  
7 Schmidt, G. and Weiner, B. (1988), "An attribution-affect-action theory of behavior:  
8 replications of judgments of help-giving", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 14  
9 No. 3, pp. 610-621, doi: 10.1177/0146167288143021.  
10

11  
12 Sekerka, L.E. and Stimel, D. (2012), "Environmental sustainability decision-making: clearing  
13 a path to change", *Journal of Public Affairs*, Vol. 12 No 3, pp. 195-205, doi: 10.1002/pa.1433.  
14

15  
16 Steigenberger, N. (2015), "Emotions in sensemaking: a change management perspective",  
17 *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, Vol. 28 No. 3, pp. 432-451, doi:  
18 10.1108/JOCM-05-2014-0095.  
19

20  
21 Van der Byl, C.A. and Slawinski, N. (2015), "Embracing tensions in corporate sustainability:  
22 a review of research from win-wins and trade-offs to paradoxes and beyond", *Organization &*  
23 *Environment*, Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 54-79, doi: 10.1177/1086026615575047.  
24

25  
26 Van der Heijden, A., Driessen, P.P. and Cramer, J.M. (2010), "Making sense of corporate  
27 social responsibility: exploring organizational processes and strategies", *Journal of Cleaner*  
28 *Production*, Vol. 18 No. 18, pp. 1787-1796, doi: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2010.07.024.  
29

30  
31 Voronov, M. and Vince, R. (2012). "Integrating emotions into the analysis of institutional  
32 work", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 37 No. 1, pp. 58-81, doi:  
33 10.5465/amr.2010.0247.  
34

35  
36 Weick, K.E. (1993), "The collapse of sensemaking in organizations: the Mann Gulch disaster".  
37 *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 38 No. 4, pp. 628-652, doi: 10.2307/2393339.  
38

39  
40 Weick, K.E. (1995), *Sensemaking in Organizations*. SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

41  
42 Wright, C. and Nyberg, D. (2012), "Working with passion: emotionology, corporate  
43 environmentalism and climate change", *Human Relations*, Vol. 65 No. 12, pp. 1561-1587, doi:  
44 10.1177/0018726712457698.  
45

46  
47 Ziek, P. (2009), "Making sense of CSR communication", *Corporate Social Responsibility and*  
48 *Environmental Management*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 137-145, doi: 10.1002/csr.183.  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

Appendix

**Table I** Interview data

Social Responsibility Journal

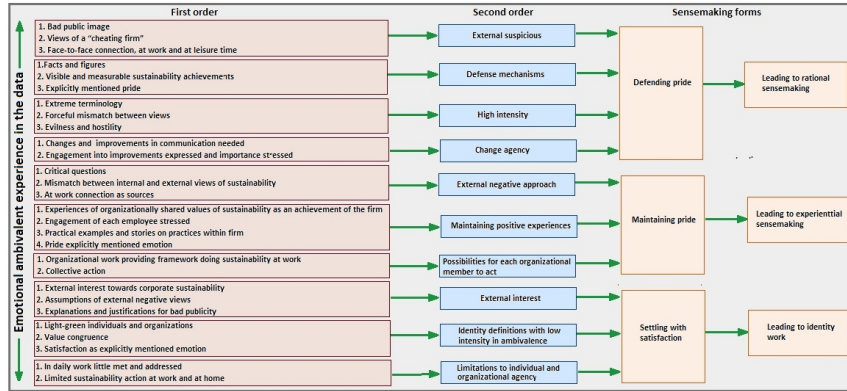


Figure 1

359x150mm (96 x 96 DPI)

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60



**Table I** Sensemaking types for resolving emotional tensions related to organizational sustainability

<i>Sensemaking type</i>	<i>Emotional elements</i>	<i>Sensemaking devices</i>	<i>Implications for action</i>
Rational sensemaking	Maintaining pride	Questioning using counterarguments	Active action for change
Experiential sensemaking	Defending pride	Using narratives to shift attention from external negativity to internal positivity	Collective action, no need for further changes
Identity work	Settling with satisfaction	Identity work	Limited action

**Table I** Interview data

<i>Number</i>	<i>Title (gender)</i>	<i>Interview type</i>	<i>Interview length</i>
1	Sustainability manager (female)	Video	41
2	Environmental engineer (female)	Telephone	20
3	Environmental manager (female)	Video	44
4	Environmental manager (male)	In-person	46
5	Environmental health and safety manager (female)	In-person	36
6	Manager (certain geographical areas) (female)	In-person	55
7	Communication director (female)	In-person	46
8	Head of financial issues (male)	In-person	43
9	Head of external communications (male)	In-person	49
10	Environmental manager (male)	In-person	65
11	Environmental health and safety manager (female)	In-person	46
12	Human resources director (female)	In-person	19
13	Purchasing manager (female)	In-person	26
14	Environmental expert (male)	In-person	20
15	Sustainability coordinator (female)	In-person	39
16	Financial manager (male)	In-person	23
17	Communications and sustainability manager (female)	Video	46
18	Environmental health and safety manager (male)	Video	35
19	Legal counsel (male)	In-person	37
20	Production manager (female)	In-person	62
21	Business development manager (female)	Telephone	36
22	Environmental health, safety, and quality engineer (female)	In-person	33
23	Occupational health physician (female)	In-person	25
24	Financial coordinator (female)	In-person	25
25	Business development manager (male)	Telephone	45